



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

SNC Governing Board Meeting

March 4, 2021

This meeting will be
held online.

Image: PCT near Castle Peak.

BOARD MEETING



Board Meeting Agenda March 4, 2021

Board Meeting

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (End time is approximate)

Pursuant to Executive Order N-29-20 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 17, 2020, certain provisions of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act are suspended due to a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with this Executive Order, the March 2021 Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board Meeting will be conducted virtually through the Zoom Webinar Platform. Members of the public may join the meeting using either of the following steps:

[Join the webinar](#)

Or

Dial either of these numbers and enter the Conference Code to join the meeting by telephone:

Dial:

USA 636 651 3142 US Toll

USA 877 402 9757 US Toll-free

Conference code: 347291

Meeting Materials are available on the [SNC Board Meetings page](https://sierranevada.ca.gov/our-board/board-meetings/) (<https://sierranevada.ca.gov/our-board/board-meetings/>). Members of the public can make comments on agenda items during the meeting by using either method of joining the meeting – virtually or telephonically – and by following the moderator’s directions on how to indicate their interest in speaking. Public comment will be taken at the appropriate time during each agenda item and during the Public Comment agenda item at the end of the meeting for non-agenda items. Additional information on ways to provide public comments on agenda items is available on the SNC Board Meetings page.

For additional information, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212, or via email to tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov.

For assistance with joining the meeting by telephone or the Zoom meeting link, please contact [SNC Technical Support](mailto:ITSupport@sierranevada.ca.gov) (ITSupport@sierranevada.ca.gov). Any person who has a disability and requires reasonable accommodation to participate in this public meeting should contact Ms. Armstrong no later than five (5) working days prior to meeting.

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**
4. **Approval of December 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**
5. **Board Chair's Report**
6. **Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
 - a. Executive Officer Update
 - b. Administrative Update
 - c. Policy and Outreach Update
 - d. Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Update

7. **2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines (ACTION)**

DRAFT: 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines

The Board may consider and approve Grant Guidelines for the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Program and authorize staff to take the necessary steps to implement the program.

8. **Executive Officer Authorization to Enter Agreements Related to Wildfire and Forest Resilience Proposal (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to authorize the Executive Officer to enter into grants or contracts with partner agencies that are a part of the Administration's proposed Wildfire and Forest Resilience budget package.

9. **Forest and Watershed Health Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award grants to the following projects:

- a) #1275, the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project in Lassen and Plumas counties, in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption
- b) #1276, the Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 acres in Modoc National Forest in Modoc County, in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

10. **Roadmap to Resilience (INFORMATIONAL)**

Consultants will provide recommendations for a Roadmap to Resilience in the Sierra Nevada.

11. Boardmembers' Comments

Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.

12. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for members of the public who have not previously addressed the Board to comment on non-agenda items. The Board Chair reserves the right to limit the time allocated for each person providing public comment.

13. Adjournment

Additional Board Materials

- [Key Meetings and Presentations](#)
- [Letters of Support](#)
- [News Articles](#)

Closed Session: Following, or at any time during, the meeting, the Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation, property negotiations, or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126



Board Meeting Minutes December 10, 2020

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Present: Terry O'Brien, Mary Rickert, Bob Johnston, Richard Anderson, Stacy Corless, John Brissenden, Rosemarie Smallcombe, Christopher Heppe, Jim Richardson, Nathan Magsig (arrived at 9:53 a.m.), and Susana Reyes

Absent: Barnie Gyant, Paul Roen, and Richard Gillihan

3. **Approval of September 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

ACTION: Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember Mary Rickert seconded, a motion to approve the September 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes.

After a roll call, vote the results were: Aye – 8, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

4. **Board Chair's Report**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien acknowledged departing Subregion Representative Boardmembers Mary Rickert, Richard Anderson, and Stacy Corless. Departing Boardmembers provided brief comments.

Chair O'Brien also acknowledged departing Boardmembers United States Forest Service (USFS) Representative Barnie Gyant and the California Natural Resources Agency Designee Jennifer Montgomery.

Chair O'Brien also acknowledged and thanked Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) Area Representative Lynn Campbell who is retiring at the end of December.

5. **Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

a. **Executive Officer Update**

Executive Officer Angela Avery acknowledged the many accomplishments of SNC in 2020 including the award of 37 grant totaling about \$18.7 million.

Avery also mentioned that the Board's Executive Officer performance review was completed prior to this meeting and she will be following up with Boardmembers to address comments and feedback given in the review.

Avery provided the Board with a very high level overview of SNC budget and related actions. Avery stated that SNC currently has just under \$15 million left in bond funding, \$5 million in Proposition 68 available to be awarded in this fiscal year and next fiscal year. An additional \$9.6 million dollars in Proposition 68 funding is available, with \$5 million for grant projects in fiscal year 2022-23 and the final \$4.6 million available for grant projects in the 2024-25 timeframe.

Avery provided an update on the Roadmap to Resilience project announcing that SNC has entered into an agreement with Spatial Informatics Group to build off of the information and lessons learned from the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative and other large landscape Regional efforts.

Avery announced the upcoming retirement of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy North Subregion Area Representative, Lynn Campbell. Avery thanked Lynn for her many years of service to the SNC and acknowledged all of her successes and many contributions to the Region.

Campbell addressed the Board and provided thanks to the SNC staff. Campbell also addressed the Board and thanked them for the support and guidance over the years.

b. Administrative Update

Administrative Division Chief Amy Lussier addressed the Board to provide a high-level update regarding SNC administrative activities and budget. Lussier told the Board that based on the recent state orders, SNC has discontinued the approval of any essential travel.

Lussier told the Board that SNC staff member Brian Bose will continue to be assigned to contact tracing for another six months, and the second SNC employee who was trained for contact tracing, Denice Maberry, will now be deployed.

c. Policy and Outreach Update

Policy and Outreach Manager Brittany Covich provided a brief legislative update by announcing that the new legislative session convened on December 7. Covich said that 70 Senate and approximately 100 Assembly bills have been introduced into this new session and SNC staff will continue to monitor and report on relevant bills.

Covich provided an update on the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Capacity Program. These Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) funds are currently supporting several areas including capacity building workshops and training, mapping Subregional projects, and other important activities. Covich shared progress updates from several of the grantees receiving funds under this program.

Covich provided a brief Communications Unit update and highlighted the development of the Sierra Spotlight website, which will share the work being done by SNC and regional partners.

d. Field Operations and Grants

Field Operations and Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky provided the Board with an update of the division operations. This update included a heartfelt acknowledgement to Lynn Campbell for her hard work and dedication to the SNC. Fristensky also provided the Board with an update on the filling of Lynn's position stating that Kristy Hoffman will take over the North Subregion and a new hire will take the North Central Subregion.

Fristensky told the Board that the 100+ ongoing grants are moving forward and SNC is expecting to present additional grant proposals to the Board in March 2021.

Fristensky provided the Board with an update on the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program funding specific to AB 2551 legislation, and said that SNC has started the outreach process to establish grant agreements to award funds for that purpose.

Fristensky said the French Meadows partnership was recently recognized by the USFS, Region 5 in the category of all lands watershed and forest health.

6. Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to elect Terry O'Brien as Board Chair for 2021.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

ACTION: Boardmember Stacy Corless moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to elect Rosemarie Smallcombe as Board Vice-Chair for 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

7. 2021 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to approve the 2021 Board meeting schedule as follows:

March 3 – 4, 2021 (Sacramento)

June 2 – 3, 2021 (East Subregion-Mono County)

September 1 – 2, 2021 (North Subregion-Shasta County)

December 9 – 10, 2021 (South-Central Subregion-Mariposa County)

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

8. Moonlight Restoration California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Addendum (ACTION)

Grants Reimbursement Coordinator Andrea Williams provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Board which summarized the project progress and outlined the Addendum.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation with questions related to this project. Boardmember Christopher Heppe asked the cost per acre. Williams will come back to the Board and report out the cost per acre. Boardmember Susana Reyes would like to see the results from the proposed treatment method when the project is completed.

ACTION: Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Stacy Corless seconded, a motion to approve as a Responsible Agency the addendum to the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration filed by the Feather River Resource Conservation District for the addition of prescribed herbivory as a treatment method on the Moonlight Restoration project and direct staff to take the necessary actions for its successful implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

9. SNC Grant #1063 the Von Der Ahe Forest Enhancement Project California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Determination to Increase Treatment Acreage (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided the Board with a brief PowerPoint presentation which summarized the project action requested.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Mary Rickert seconded, a motion to approve the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for the Von Der Ahe Forest Enhancement Project (1063), and authorize staff to revise the grant agreement to include additional treatment acres if previously authorized grant funds are available.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

10. 2020 Wildfire Impacts Update (INFORMATIONAL)

SNC Regional Scientist Nic Enstice provided the Boardmembers with a PowerPoint presentation which summarized acres burned during the 2020 Fire Season. Other information such as drought and tree mortality numbers were shared in order to discuss the relationship between fire severity and factors such as these.

Enstice's presentation was followed by some recent in-Region photos presented by Field Operations and Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky. These photos demonstrated the positive impacts that past SNC projects have made in the 2020 wildfire areas.

Boardmembers engaged in extensive conversation around the PPT presentation. Boardmembers discussed questions around fire prediction and modeling as well as research and lessons learned.

Boardmembers further engaged in conversation around funding and research.

11. Annual Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Communications Manager Isaac Silverman presented a brief PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the SNC Annual Report format and distribution plan.

12. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Stacy Corless and Boardmember John Brissenden made brief comments.

13. Public Comments

There was no public comment at this time

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021

Agenda Item 6b: Administrative Update

Current Status

COVID Impacts

The California Department of Public Health ended the Regional Stay at Home Order across California on January 25, 2021. Under this order, counties are returned to their assigned Blueprint for a Safer Economy tiers and must follow those guidelines for reopening. The Management Team continues to consider when to allow for a regular return to office prior to the full deployment of a vaccine. When staff do return, it will be following the governor's direction to continue teleworking for the majority of staff, so procedures have been developed to track and limit the number of staff in the Auburn Headquarters office at one time (not to exceed 25 percent). Regardless of county status, employees wishing to continue working from home while SNC remains under emergency declaration will be encouraged to do so. Assuming that county status will allow, staff will also once again be able to request essential travel within the state.

Budgets and Accounting

The governor's proposed 2021-22 budget was released on January 8, 2021. Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC's) base funding in the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) remains virtually the same with small, expected adjustments. Federal Trust Fund authority was reduced to \$2.4 million and SNC Fund reimbursement authority was reduced to \$1.4 million. These reductions were based on projected reimbursements for the fiscal year. Support funding was appropriated in Proposition 84 for \$50,000, Proposition 1 for \$103,000, and Proposition 68 for \$545,000.

The governor's budget also included new General Fund money for both current year (CY) 2020-21 and budget year (BY) 2021-22. Upon approval by the legislature, SNC would receive \$20 million in CY and \$50 million in BY. In CY, \$19 million is available for local assistance, and five percent (\$1 million) is available for support. In BY, \$47.5 million is available for local assistance and \$2.5 million is available for support. The budget also includes three new positions to help support this program. The positions would be available to start work no earlier than July 1, 2021, and are dependent upon approval of the budget.

On November 3, 2020, SNC received a budget letter from the Department of Finance directing all departments to assume a five percent ongoing budget reduction on July 1, 2021. In response to that letter, SNC submitted a five percent reduction plan to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) in mid-January. The five percent reduction applies only to operating expenses in ELPF, for a total reduction amount of \$53,000. The SNC reviewed expenditures from the last six years to help determine where to make the reductions – small cuts were made to a handful of line items. As of

the writing of this report, SNC has not received either approval or disapproval on the proposed plan. A verbal update on the status of the approval will be given at the Board meeting. The five percent reduction has not been removed from the 2021-22 budget yet; SNC expects this will happen through a control section adjustment.

The SNC continues to track and report COVID-19 expenses. As of mid-January, SNC spent \$53,570 on contact tracing expenses, which are expected to be reimbursed, and \$6,324 on operating expenses and equipment, with another \$14,095 in expected expenditures through June 2021.

The status of SNC's 2020-21 budget can be viewed on page three of this report.

Information Technology (IT)

All state entities are required to participate in an Information Security Assessment (ISA) every two years. The ISA is a regimented and detailed assessment conducted by the California Military Department at a cost of \$38,000. The SNC's assessment was completed in September 2020 and the final assessment report was received in January. While the overall score was favorable, a few areas of concern were identified. IT staff will work to remediate the issues.

Human Resources

In January, SNC welcomed Tuli Potts to the Field Operations Team to serve as the North Subregion Area Representative. For the past 10 years Tuli has run Alpineworks, an environmental consulting business in the north state. Before Alpineworks, Tuli was the City Planner for Mt. Shasta, the Senior Planner for Siskiyou County, and she has also worked in the private planning sector. Tuli has a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Planning and Interpretation from Humboldt State University.

Starting in December, a second member of the SNC team was assigned to complete contact tracing. Denice Mayberry, the face of SNC's front desk, joins Brian Bose, SNC's staff writer, in supporting the state's contract tracing effort. The loss of these two employees has been challenging.

To help pick up some of the workload related to front desk duties, a Limited Term Office Technician position was advertised in January. A verbal update on the status of this recruitment will be provided at the March meeting.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

2020-21 SNC Budget (as of December 31, 2020)

Environmental License Plate Fund Support	Budget	Expenditures
Personal Services	\$3,450,658	\$1,903,634
Operating Expenses & Equipment (OE&E)	\$952,342	\$260,866
Total ELPF (Personal Services + OE&E)	\$4,403,000	\$2,164,500

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Fund Support	Budget	Expenditures
Personal Services	\$145,063	\$57,876
Operating Expenses & Equipment (OE&E)	\$7,271,513	\$287,144
Total SNC Fund (Personal Services + OE&E)	\$7,416,576	\$345,020

Proposition 1 Total	Budget	Expenditures
Program Delivery	\$200,000	\$63,756

Proposition 68	Budget	Expenditures
Program Delivery – Conservancy Allocation	\$275,000	\$87,133
Planning & Monitoring – Conservancy Allocation	\$50,000	\$13,500
Program Delivery – Forest Restoration Allocation	\$225,000	\$72,734
Total Proposition 68	\$550,000	\$173,367

Proposition 84 Total	Budget	Expenditures
Planning & Monitoring	\$30,000	\$8,752

Reimbursements

SNC Fund Reimbursements – Projected	Projected	Received
CAL FIRE	\$7,192,021	\$471
CNRA/Department of Conservation	\$913,200	\$143,021
CHIPs	\$149,825	\$0
HCD/NDRC	\$116,442	\$0
Stewardship Council	\$11,512	\$1,375
Total Projected Reimbursements	\$8,383,000	\$144,867

Federal Funding – Total Projected	Projected	Received
USFS – Plumas National Forest	\$1,546,015	\$602,263

Agenda Item 6c: Policy and Outreach Update

Background

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) policy and outreach activities support sound, science-based agency action and educate key decision makers about the statewide importance of the Sierra Nevada to encourage appropriate investment in the Region. This is done by understanding the latest scientific studies on forestry, watershed health, and other relevant issues; utilizing the recommendations and outcomes of that research to inform policy recommendations; and sharing those recommendations and outcomes through SNC's outreach efforts. Developing and maintaining relationships with legislators and their staff, state and federal agencies, local governments, Regional partners, the research community, and traditional and non-traditional media contacts are key to the success of SNC's policy and outreach efforts. In addition, while SNC's policy and outreach activities support all the Regional Goals in the SNC's Strategic Plan, they focus heavily on the cultivation of an impactful Regional identity for the Sierra Nevada Region.

Current Status

State Budget Update

On Friday, January 8, Governor Newsom released the January draft of the 2021-22 California Budget. The impacts to California's fiscal outlook from the COVID-19 pandemic proved less severe than anticipated, resulting in an estimated \$15.5 billion surplus that the governor allocated in developing his 2021-22 budget proposal.

The governor's proposed budget includes a Climate Change chapter that builds on the state's commitments to protect the environment, address the effects of climate change, and reduce wildfire risk. Within the Climate Change chapter, the draft proposes a \$1 billion Wildfire and Forest Resilience Budget (budget) proposal to fund forest health and wildfire risk reduction statewide. A total of \$323 million will be allocated to the current fiscal year and \$677 million will be allocated for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22. Of the \$1 billion, \$675 million is from the General Fund, most, if not all, of which comes from the \$15.5 billion surplus, and \$325 million is from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.

At a high level, the budget would provide funding for increasing landscape-scale resilience through:

- prescribed fire, forest health, and fire prevention projects
- creating strategic fuel breaks
- hardening and protecting vulnerable communities
- adding workforce and organizational capacity to do forest health work

- improving scientific data and modeling of wildfire resilience
- improving permitting capacity for prescribed fire and fuels management

The governor's proposed budget would provide much-needed resources to the SNC and the Sierra Nevada, providing at least \$70 million over the next two years to the SNC to spend through the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). A more detailed breakdown of potential funding for the SNC is provided in both the Administrative Update and Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines Staff Report. In addition, the budget provides funding that could accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration work in the Sierra Nevada Region. For example:

- The Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) would be appropriated \$25 million in the current fiscal year and \$60 million in FY 2021-22.
- CAL FIRE would be appropriated over \$500 million over the next two years, including being fully funded for their Cap and Trade Grant Programs.
- Funding would be allocated to expand economic and job opportunities through the Climate Catalyst Fund's low-interest lending program and forest management job training.
- A proposed statutory change would make \$200 million of Cap and Trade funding for CAL FIRE's forest health and fire prevention programs available for an additional five years beyond the existing 2023-24 sunset date.

The funding for SNC, the RFFCP, the Climate Catalyst Fund, and most of the funding for CAL FIRE is part of an early action funding proposal that the governor proposes the Legislature pass in early Spring.

The governor's proposed budget did not include a direct mention of a natural resources or climate resilience bond in future years, but bond conversations continue in both the legislature and among partners.

The Legislature will have to vote to pass both the emergency current year budget proposal and the FY 2021-22 budget. The legislature could act quickly to pass the current year emergency budget, but the FY 2021-22 budget will follow the standard budget process timeline including a governor's revise in May, a final legislative vote by June 15, and then the governor's approval and signature by June 30.

Legislative Update

The Legislature reconvened for the 2021-22 legislative session on January 11. Legislators have been asked to reduce the number of bills they introduce this session, anticipating the session could be impacted by COVID-19.

Both the Assembly and Senate introduced their budget bills for FY 2021-22, and both include the \$50 million in funding for the SNC. The SNC will continue to track hearings related to the proposed budget.

The SNC is already tracking over a dozen bills, including a natural resources bond. Policy topics covered in these bills include regional climate change programs and planning, community wildfire planning, natural and working lands project tracking, carbon sequestration, workforce development, wildfire research and technology, and energy resilience.

SNC staff will continue to track these bills and others that may impact SNC's work and the work of SNC's Regional partners.

Senate Bill 208

Senate Bill 208 by Senator Dahle would modify SNC's boundaries by adding a portion of Siskiyou County and Trinity County to the Region and increasing the area of Shasta County within the Region. The same legislation was introduced last session through SB 989.

Senate Bill 45

Senate Bill 45 was reintroduced by Senator Portantino (La Cañada Flintridge) and is similar to the last session's bond with the same bill number. As currently written, the "Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2022" would finance wildfire prevention, drought, and other natural disaster prevention as well as community resilience from climate change. The bond would also provide for safe drinking water and protect water supply and water quality; protect fish and wildlife; protect agriculture land; protect coastal lands, oceans, bays, waters, natural resources, and wildlife; and provide for climate resilience, workforce development, and education. The \$5.51 billion bond currently includes over \$2.2 billion for wildfire prevention and community resilience, including \$300 million for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program statewide, \$50 million for the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), and \$85 million for the SNC.

California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan

On January 8, the governor's Forest Management Task Force released "California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan" (Plan). The Plan will strategically accelerate efforts to restore the health and resilience of California forests, grasslands, and natural places; improve the fire safety of its communities; and sustain the economic vitality of rural forested areas.

The Plan integrates recommendations from existing state and federal plans, including the 2018 Forest Carbon Plan, the 2018 Safeguarding California Plan, the 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, and the 2019 Lake Tahoe Forest Action Plan.

The Plan is organized into four goals:

- Increase pace and scale of forest health projects
- Strengthen the protection of communities
- Manage forests to achieve the state's economic and environmental goals
- Drive innovation and measure progress

Actions outlined in the Plan align with the governor's \$1 billion Wildfire and Forest Resilience Budget proposal and build on the Shared Stewardship Agreement that the governor signed with the U.S. Forest Service last summer. Additionally, the Plan includes actions to develop prescribed fire insurance alternatives and streamline permitting processes.

The SNC is identified in the Plan to help support the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program and utilize the Pillars of Resilience, developed through the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative, to prioritize projects. The SNC will also contribute to achieving many other goals under the Plan, including accelerating restoration across all lands, improving and increasing outreach and technical assistance, and increasing the use of prescribed fire.

WIP Capacity Program Update

The SNC staff continues to build capacity within the Sierra Nevada Region through the eleven original WIP Capacity Program RFFCP subgrantees. These subgrantees are working in their geographies to further project development, landscape-scale project planning, partnership development, and capacity building for the organizations and agencies involved in forest and fire work. The current goal is to help the organizations and partnerships in the Region advance to the next level of project planning and implementation.

The RFFCP grant helped develop partnerships, initiate collaborative planning, and built the capacity of the agencies and organizations to undertake forest restoration projects. The SNC is exploring ways to build on this work to develop a project pipeline of collaborative planning, permitting, funding, and implementation in each of the seven geographies. The ultimate goal is to have strong and effective organizational infrastructure throughout the Region which is actively implementing forest restoration at an increased pace and scale, allowing the Region to meet the goals set by the governor and the Forest Management Task Force.

Examples of specific activities currently underway are detailed below.

Applying Drone Technology

Using inexpensive drone technology to help plan and design restoration projects, the Tuolumne River Trust used RFFCP funding to purchase a UAV (drone) and develop

'structure from motion' planning tools. They shared these with the other subgrantees in a December workshop.

Convening a new Forest Collaborative

The Eastern California Water Association has convened stakeholders in the eastern geography (Inyo, Mono, and Alpine counties) to form their first forest collaborative, coordinating ecosystem health and fire prevention efforts. The group has agreed to move forward with Subregional mapping and is currently developing project prioritization criteria.

Supporting Prescribed Burn Cooperatives

The Feather River Resource Conservation District led a prescribed fire training and underburn on 700 acres in the Feather River Land Trust Property, helping to train the Plumas Underburn Cooperative. In the South Geography, the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council is working with the new Southern Sierra Burn Cooperative to help them develop collaborative project applications for funding. These projects will involve the Big Sandy Rancheria Tribal crew.

Utilization of Planning Dollars for Multiple Projects

The Great Basin Institute is assisting agencies in the East geography by creating a template of the California Environmental Quality Act environmental documentation required fuels management projects in east-side riparian zones. These zones are particularly flammable since vegetation density and continuity are far greater than the surrounding uplands. However, the documentation needed to work around waterways is extensive and agencies often do not have the resources for the environmental permitting process. The RFFCP funds will be used to create model environmental documentation for the eastern Sierra riparian corridors which can be modified for individual projects, thus streamlining the process of preparing future permitting documents.

Communications Update

Staff spent the early part of the year working to respond to requests for information about SNC's programs related to the governor's budget proposal. In addition, staff were focused on the development of the SNC's 2020 Annual Report, which is to be released at the time of the March Board Meeting and will highlight significant events and their connection with SNC's work between January and December 2020. Because so many partners, legislators, and policymakers are still working remotely, staff designed the 2020 report to be delivered in a virtual format. The report will be distributed electronically to legislators, and state, federal and nonprofit partners using our new email marketing system and will be featured for the coming weeks on SNC social media platforms.

The SNC Website plays an important role in supporting SNC's communications efforts and staff have been continuing to update and improve the user experience on the site. Those improvements include six new posts to the SNC's blog, the [Sierra Spotlight](#), as well as upgrades made to the [What We Do](#) section to better describe how SNC's work advances both state and local goals. The SNC's 2020 Annual Report will also be available on the SNC Website at the time of the March Board Meeting.

Staff also launched the WIP Capacity Newsletter which is designed to enhance information sharing between WIP Capacity Program subgrantees and introduce innovative tools, ideas, and opportunities to partners in the Region working to advance wildfire and forest health work. The newsletter is distributed quarterly to SNC's WIP Capacity Program subgrantees and other partners working under the RFFCP.

Next Steps

Staff will be closely watching the governor's budget proposal and other state policy priorities such as California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. Staff will track and respond to requests for information on new legislation, and will be working closely with the Field Operations and Grants staff to tell the story of SNC's work and describe the policy and funding needs being expressed by partners in the Region. Capacity building work will continue under the WIP Capacity Program, and staff will be engaging on both new and ongoing technical and policy workgroups established to support the state's forest health and climate goals.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE

TAHOE-CENTRAL SIERRA INITIATIVE

A Summary of the Resilience
Pillars, Elements, and Metrics





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ABOUT THE TAHOE-CENTRAL SIERRA INITIATIVE

The Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) is a partnership among the USDA Forest Service, California Tahoe Conservancy, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, National Forest Foundation, California Forestry Association, and University of California Sagehen Creek Field Station, and eight forest collaboratives. TCSI partners are accelerating the restoration of forest and watershed resilience through innovative planning, investment, and management across the 2.4-million-acre landscape.

This document was adapted from a product developed in 2020 for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for the TCSI and funded by the California Climate Investments:

Manley, P., K. Wilson, and N. Povak. 2020. Framework for Promoting Socio-ecological Resilience across Forested Landscapes in the Sierra Nevada, Final Report.



TAHOE-CENTRAL SIERRA INITIATIVE AREA



The forested watersheds of the Sierra Nevada sustain communities, provide wildlife habitat, ensure a reliable water supply for California, and combat climate change by storing carbon. However, climate change and fire suppression are amplifying wildfires, increasing droughts, and expanding tree mortality with devastating impacts to these natural and working landscapes.

TO TACKLE THESE THREATS the TCSI is accelerating the restoration of forests and watersheds and improving resilience to disturbances across 2.4 million acres. The TCSI landscape encompasses some of California's most beloved terrain, from the blue waters of Lake Tahoe through the verdant foothill communities and rivers that lead to Sacramento.



The TCSI's *Framework for Promoting Socio-ecological Resilience across Forested Landscapes in the Sierra Nevada* (Framework) provides a structure for assessing landscape conditions, setting objectives, designing projects, and measuring progress towards social-ecological resilience. The Framework offers a shared vision for landscape-scale resilience that recognizes the interdependent nature of social and ecological values. These values are described by ten pillars that represent the desired outcomes of landscape resilience. Each of the pillars provide metrics for assessing landscape conditions and verifying that actions meet resilience objectives. The Framework helps agencies, landowners, businesses, and other stakeholders to plan and implement restoration projects that align with shared values at an accelerated pace and scale, and to clearly document progress toward local, regional, and statewide goals.

An interdisciplinary team of scientists, land managers, and policymakers developed the Framework through a science-based, consensus-building process. TCSI partners then used the Framework and its pillars, along with the best-available science, to assess current conditions and model future conditions under climate change across the TCSI landscape. As a next step, TCSI partners will use the Framework and the assessment to develop measurable and achievable target conditions that promote resilience, and to identify project-level opportunities for restoration that will have the greatest benefit.



FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE: PILLARS, ELEMENTS, & METRICS

The Framework comprises three main components for describing and measuring resilience:

1 PILLARS

Pillars are the desired long-term, landscape-scale outcomes of restoring resilience. They include ecological values, such as biodiversity, as well as societal benefits to communities, such as water security.

2 ELEMENTS

Elements represent the primary processes and functions that altogether make up a pillar, such as focal species, water quality, or economic health.

3 METRICS

Metrics describe the characteristics of elements in quantitative or qualitative terms. Stakeholders can use metrics to assess, plan for, measure, and monitor progress towards desired outcomes and greater resilience. While pillars and elements are consistent across the Sierra Nevada, the metrics that a group uses may vary from region to region based on ecological and social differences (for example forest types, economy), available data, and stakeholder preferences.

WHY SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE?

People are part of nature, and the threats facing forested watersheds also threaten California's communities and economies. The Framework therefore employs the concept of social-ecological resilience, which refers to the capacity of systems to cope with and adapt to stress and disturbance while retaining the functions and benefits that people value. The TCSI's strategies thus target not only ecological but also social outcomes such as air quality, recreation, and industry.

THE PILLARS OF RESILIENCE

This section describes the ten pillars of resilience, along with their associated elements and metrics. For each, there is also a short outcome statement that characterizes desired conditions.

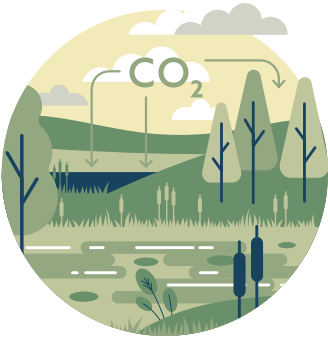


FOREST RESILIENCE

RESILIENT FORESTS PROVIDE many ecosystem services, including wildlife habitat, clean water, stable soils, recreational opportunities, biodiversity, wood products, and carbon sequestration. They also play an important role in both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Across the landscape, management activities and natural disturbances should maintain desired forest conditions, including forest heterogeneity and wildlife habitat.

OUTCOME: Vegetation composition and structure align with topography, desired disturbance dynamics, and landscape conditions, and are adapted to climate change.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Structure	Tree density Basal area Large/tall tree density Clump/gap structure Individual, clumps, and openings composite index Seral stage (early, mid, late) Large snag density
Composition	Vegetation community type Tree species diversity
Disturbance	Loss of forest cover Time since disturbance Recent disturbance return interval

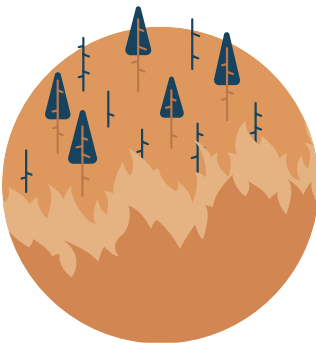


CARBON SEQUESTRATION

CARBON SEQUESTRATION IS THE PROCESS by which carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants and stored as carbon in biomass and soils. Resilient forests and wetlands can be net sinks of carbon and can play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, thereby mitigating climate change. Forest products also play a role in storing carbon for decades in building materials, thereby delaying emissions.

OUTCOME: Carbon sequestration is enhanced in a stable and sustainable manner that yields multiple ecological and social benefits.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Storage	Mass
Stability	Persistence



FIRE DYNAMICS

FIRE IS AN INTEGRAL PART of Sierra Nevada forest ecosystems, which are evolutionarily adapted to fire. Ideally prescribed fires and managed wildfires would be allowed to burn across the landscape periodically. They would burn primarily at low to moderate severity in a mosaic pattern that covers large areas, which would provide substantial ecological benefits. Because climate change generally increases the severity of fire dynamics, managing such dynamics will continue to grow in importance.

OUTCOME: Fire burns in an ecologically beneficial and socially acceptable way that perpetuates landscape heterogeneity and rarely threatens human safety or infrastructure.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Severity	Risk of high-severity fire High-intensity patch size
Functional fire	Time since fire and frequency Proportion of fire as high severity

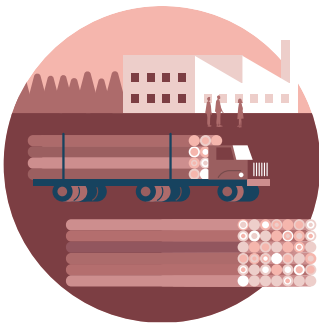


FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES

DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE and other drivers, wildfires increasingly threaten homes and communities, especially in the wildland-urban interface. Fire adapted communities are knowledgeable and engaged. They accept fire as part of the surrounding landscape, take action to reduce their vulnerability to fire, and adapt to live safely with fire.

OUTCOME: Communities have adapted to live safely in forested landscapes and understand the significance of fire to maintaining healthy forests. They have sufficient capacity to manage desired fire and suppress unwanted fire.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Hazard	Risk of high- and moderate-severity fire Threat to infrastructure
Preparedness	Community Wildfire Protection Plans Egress/ingress plans Fire management plans



ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

ECONOMIC DIVERSITY INCREASES business opportunities that provide regional economic vitality and additional benefits to rural and vulnerable populations. Resilient forests provide ecosystem services and forest products that in turn provide a foundation for many local and regional economic activities and employment opportunities, including recreation, tourism, and natural resource management industries.

OUTCOME: Forest management and outdoor activities support a sustainable, natural-resource-based economy, particularly in rural communities.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Wood product industry	Sawtimber supply and demand Biomass supply and demand Small-diameter tree supply and demand Processing capacity
Recreation industry	Recreation diversity Recreational use
Water industry	Water management infrastructure
Economic health	Job market in natural resources Employment resilience Income diversity



SOCIAL & CULTURAL WELL-BEING

A GROWING BODY OF EVIDENCE indicates that greater exposure to nature is associated with better health and well-being. Sierra Nevada forests allow people to build and maintain active cultural and social connections to a place. Resilient landscapes offer opportunities for people to connect with the natural environment through recreation experiences, culturally valued resources, and engagement in natural resource management and conservation.

OUTCOME: The landscape provides a place for people to connect with nature, to recreate, to maintain and improve their overall health, and to contribute to environmental stewardship, and is a critical component of their identity.

ELEMENT

Public health

Public engagement

Recreation quality

Equitable opportunity

METRICS

Smoke-induced illness
Public health susceptibility

Natural resource knowledge

Costs and benefits to recreation

Environmental justice



WETLAND INTEGRITY

WETLANDS PROVIDE critical habitat, filter and retain nutrient pollution, store carbon, enhance water quality, control erosion, and provide spaces for recreation. They are local and regional centers of biodiversity, and support species found nowhere else across western landscapes. Functional wetland ecosystems will serve increasingly important roles in buffering impacts from extreme climate events, and upland disturbances such as flooding and erosion.

OUTCOME: Meadow and riparian ecosystems provide multiple ecosystem services and are key linkages between upland and aquatic systems in forested landscapes.

ELEMENT

Structure

Composition

Hydrologic function

METRICS

Stream channel morphology
Alluvium storage capacity

Carbon content
Benthic invertebrates

Surface water flow
Stream channel discharge



BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

BIODIVERSITY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE in our ecosystems and society. Native plants and animals help forests recover after a fire, control flooding and soil erosion, and cycle nutrients. Biodiversity also holds cultural value, including Native American uses, and provides recreational benefits like birdwatching. Greater species diversity promotes adaptability and helps ecosystems withstand and recover from disturbances, including those caused by a changing climate.

OUTCOME: The network of native species and ecological communities is sufficiently abundant and distributed across the landscape to support and sustain their full suite of ecological and cultural roles.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Focal species	Suitable habitat for focal species Critical habitat for listed species
Species diversity	Species diversity Non-native species distribution
Community integrity	Functional group diversity Community diversity



WATER SECURITY

RESILIENT FORESTED WATERSHEDS are key for regional and statewide water security. The economic value of California's water far exceeds that of any other forest product. Water flows from forests into rivers that provide critical aquatic and wetland habitat, and that supply agricultural and drinking water for tens of millions of people. Forests serve as natural water collection, storage, filtration, and delivery systems. These functions will become more important as climate change intensifies.

OUTCOME: Watersheds provide a reliable supply of clean water despite wide swings in annual precipitation, droughts, flooding, and wildfire.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Quantity	Ground water Water yield Snow accumulation
Storage and timing	Stream flow volume Reservoir storage Snow water content Snow melt
Quality	Nitrogen Phosphorus Sediment Pollution



AIR QUALITY

CLEAN AIR IS IMPORTANT to human health and wellness, clean water, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Catastrophic wildfires degrade air quality and cause respiratory illnesses that affect millions of people, especially children and people who work outdoors. Furthermore, people prefer to enjoy the outdoors when it is safe to breathe and the skies are clear. Smoke from wildfires discourages recreation and disrupts businesses and local economies. Land managers seek to improve forest health and resilience by using prescribed fire to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic fire and smoke.

OUTCOME: Emissions from fires are limited to primarily low- and moderate-severity fires in wildland ecosystems. Forests improve air quality by capturing pollutants.

ELEMENT	METRICS
Particulate matter	Wildfire emissions Prescribed fire emissions
Visibility	Visual quality
Greenhouse gases	Ozone





TAILORING THE FRAMEWORK TO SPECIFIC REGIONS AND MANAGEMENT SCALES

While the Framework's components apply throughout the Sierra Nevada, land managers and stakeholders can tailor applications of pillars, elements, and metrics to their unique geography. Stakeholders who want to emphasize the role of commercial wood products in local economies will focus their planning on different elements and metrics than stakeholders focusing on forest-based recreation. Each stakeholder group would be able to select relevant elements from the Framework to meet their management objectives.

The Framework is also scalable. Land managers can use it to evaluate single 5,000-acre projects just as easily as they can to evaluate 500,000-acre landscapes with dozens of projects. This lets partners match the scale of management to the scale of the ecological and biological processes, such as wildfire or migration, that shape and maintain landscapes.

For questions about the science or how to use the Framework in your area, or to share stories about your experiences with it, contact us by visiting sierranevada.ca.gov/tcsi.



Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative

sierranevada.ca.gov/tcsi

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021

Agenda Item 7:
2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience
Grant Guidelines

Background

In January 2021, Governor Newsom released his proposed budget that includes \$1 billion to reduce wildfire risk to vulnerable communities and improve the health of forests and natural landscapes. The budget proposes funding for the upcoming fiscal year (FY) 2021-22, but also includes funding for early actions in the current year (FY 2020-21). The proposed budget aligns with the priorities outlined in the recently released report by the governor's Forest Management Task Force, titled [California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: A Comprehensive Strategy](#).

As the governor's budget proposal is being considered by the Legislature, SNC staff is taking steps to prepare for potential current year 'early action' funding, which would be immediately available in SNC's budget upon approval. Pending budget approval, \$20 million of the General Fund would be appropriated to the SNC for the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The WIP is a large-scale restoration program designed to restore the health of California's primary watershed and create resilient Sierra Nevada communities. It is recognized by state policy and planning documents as a model program for addressing the growing challenges facing the Sierra Nevada Region in a changing climate.

The SNC was identified in the budget proposal as a key organization to implement projects, as SNC stewards the highest fire-risk region in the state from which originates more than 60 percent of California's developed water supply. According to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) fire risk map, over 72 percent of the Sierra Nevada region is in elevated or extreme fire risk. These catastrophic wildfires across California's critical watersheds exacerbate drought conditions for decades after a fire. The WIP is effective at using science-based management and building community coalitions to execute programs, and SNC partners are ready to implement a wide range of critical projects. Targeting regional funding to the SNC will deliver both wildfire and drought resilience, and protection for communities, habitat, and California's water supply.

Current Status

The SNC staff developed [2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines](#) (Guidelines) for Board consideration.

This grant program seeks to create more resilient forest landscapes and reduce wildfire risk. The climate and ecological benefits of forest restoration treatments are well known. Ecologically sound forest management, including prescribed fire, and community

protection are critical in securing the overall well-being of the Sierra Nevada region. The SNC seeks projects that will help secure carbon stability in the Sierra Nevada by reducing the risk for large, damaging wildfires. Landscape-scale forest health treatments reduce the intensity of wildland fires. The reduced intensity of wildland fire also makes it safer for firefighting resources to utilize fuel breaks to protect structures if a fire enters the wildland urban interface (WUI).

Program Priorities

The specific focus area of the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program is the implementation of forest health projects that address wildfire recovery and resilience and support the goals of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and the WIP.

California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan identifies three goals that are strongly aligned with the WIP: healthy and resilient natural places, safe communities, and sustainable economies. Both plans also stress the importance of climate resiliency, regionally tailored solutions, the linkages between ecological and economic health, the importance of low-intensity fire, and the need to work strategically across land ownership boundaries. This grant program will support projects that benefit multiple watersheds, ecosystems, and communities. Examples of such benefits include reduced likelihood of high-intensity fire and the negative consequences of such fires, protection and enhancement of natural resources, habitat and recreation, improved air and water quality, increased carbon sequestration and reduced GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions and supporting regional economies.

Recognizing the intent of the funding and importance of the Immediate Action program to make on-the-ground impacts, projects funded under this program will need to be ready to implement upon execution of a grant agreement and must be complete by January 1 of the year the funds revert. At the time of guideline development, that date is anticipated to be January 1, 2024.

Program Implementation

To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this program, projects must meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) Have completed environmental compliance.
- 2) Be located within the Sierra Nevada Region as defined by current SNC governing legislation.
- 3) Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan.
- 4) Be consistent with the requirements of the funding and budget act appropriation language.

- 5) Be complete by January 1 of the year the funds revert, anticipated to be January 1, 2024.
- 6) Request no less than \$200,000.
- 7) Result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.

Examples of potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation of strategic fuel treatment projects (including mechanical treatments, hand treatments, and/or prescribed fire) that will reduce wildfire risks and promote watershed health
- Creation and maintenance of fuel breaks
- Fuel reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface
- Strategically located fuel reduction projects that protect public assets or public infrastructure
- Reforestation and implementation of suitable stand-improvement activities after wildfire or post-tree-mortality clearing efforts
- Forest management work to improve habitat conditions, and/or protect biodiversity
- Forestry work that benefits fire evacuation routes
- Forest treatment projects that prevent and/or address the impacts of severe tree mortality

As this program is intended to support immediate action on-the-ground projects, it is designed to be a directed grant program. As a directed grant program, SNC will work directly with partners to identify eligible projects. Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis while funding remains available and will be evaluated based upon the scoring criteria in the guidelines. A project must receive an evaluation score of 80 points or above to be considered for funding award recommendation. Recommendations will be made to the SNC Governing Board no less than quarterly. This process will allow SNC to strategically develop projects and to do so in an administratively efficient manner, expediting on-the-ground projects that will have a real impact on wildfire risk and forest resilience.

Please follow the link below for the Draft 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines

- [Draft 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines](#)

Next Steps

Dependent upon Board approval and FY 2020-21 state budget appropriation, SNC staff will develop announcement, proposal, and evaluation materials for the program. The SNC will announce the program and collaborate with partners to develop projects. Staff

anticipates recommending projects to the Board at the June 2021 and September 2021 Board meetings.

The governor's budget proposal for FY 2021-22 includes an additional \$50 million General Fund appropriation for SNC to continue implementing wildfire and forest resilience projects. If the FY 2021-22 state budget is authorized with an appropriation for SNC, staff anticipates presenting additional grant guidelines and/or other recommendations to provide local assistance for project implementation.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program, pending Budget Act approval, and appropriation of funds to SNC in the FY 2020-21 State Budget.



WILDFIRE AND FOREST RESILIENCE

Directed Grant Program

2021 Immediate Action



Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California.

sierranevada.ca.gov

These proposed guidelines will become effective contingent upon SNC Governing Board approval and funding appropriation in the FY2020-2021 California State Budget

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DRAFT

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

In January 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom proposed funding for the fiscal year (FY) 2020-21 State Budget to address immediate wildfire and forest resilience priorities. The governor's Forest Management Task Force identified these priorities in [California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: A Comprehensive Strategy](#). Pending budget approval, \$20 million in General Fund may be appropriated to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) for the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The WIP is a large-scale restoration program designed to restore the health of California's primary watershed and create resilient Sierra Nevada communities. It is recognized by state policy and planning documents as a model program for addressing the growing challenges facing the Sierra Nevada Region in a changing climate.

The SNC's role in the Region is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada, its communities, and the people of California in general. SNC's Strategic Plan identifies a Healthy Watersheds and Forests Regional Goal. This goal continues the SNC's priority focus on healthy forests and broadens efforts to better integrate watershed elements into its programs, reinforcing the SNC's commitment to preserve, protect, and restore the health of the Region's watersheds, regardless of the threats they face.

Fires are becoming larger and more damaging and the SNC is taking significant steps to fund "ready projects" that can reduce wildfire risks. According to the California Public Utilities Commission fire risk map, 43 percent of the state's overall elevated or extreme fire risk falls within the SNC's Region. The Sierra Nevada Region is home to roughly 600,000 residents and attracts more than 50 million visitors every year. The Region is the source of more than 60 percent of the state's developed water supply, stores half of California's carbon in its forests, and supports a wide variety of wildlife species. Investing in the Sierra Nevada provides benefits to all Californians.

This program seeks to create more-resilient forest landscapes and reduce wildfire risk. The climate and ecological benefits of forest restoration treatments are well known. Ecologically sound forest management, including prescribed fire, and community protection are critical in securing the overall well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. SNC seeks projects that will help secure carbon stability in the Sierra Nevada by reducing the risk for large, damaging wildfires. Landscape-scale forest health treatments reduce the intensity of wildland fires. The reduced intensity of wildland fire also makes it safer for firefighting resources to utilize fuel breaks to protect structures if a fire enters the wildland urban interface (WUI).

Program Funding

All projects funded under the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program must be complete by January 1 of the year the funds revert per the FY 2020-21 budget appropriation. At the time of guideline development, this is anticipated to be January 1, 2024. An extension of time past this date will not be available.

Additional Funding Sources

If additional funding sources become available with purposes consistent with SNC's Strategic Plan, the Forest Management Task Force Action Plan, and the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program as described in these guidelines, SNC may allocate those funding sources to the support of this grant program.

Project requirements or limitations tied to specific funding sources or state budget allocations will be included in project selection criteria and grant agreements.

Program Priorities

The specific focus of the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program is the implementation of forest health projects that address wildfire recovery and resilience and support the goals of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and the WIP.

[California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) identifies three goals that are strongly aligned with the WIP: healthy and resilient natural places, safe communities, and sustainable economies. Both plans also stress the importance of climate resiliency, regionally tailored solutions, the linkages between ecological and economic health, the importance of low-intensity fire, and the need to work strategically across land ownership boundaries.

The program aims to support projects that result in a combination of multiple watershed, ecosystem, and community benefits. Examples of such benefits include reduced likelihood of high-intensity fire and the negative consequences of such fires, protection and enhancement of natural resources, habitat and recreation, improved air and water quality, increased carbon sequestration and reduced GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions, and supporting regional economies.

All projects must be ready to proceed upon award and must be complete by January 1, 2024, or January 1 of the year the funds revert, if different.

II. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Applicant Eligibility

Grant funds may be authorized for:

- Public agencies: any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency
- Qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: "Nonprofit Organization" means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC
- Eligible Tribal Entities: an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe

Eligible tribal entities are encouraged to apply. On September 25, 2020, the governor released a [Statement of Administration Policy on Native American Ancestral Lands](#) to encourage every state agency, department, board, and commission subject to his executive control to seek opportunities to support California tribes' co-management of and access to natural lands that are within a California tribe's ancestral land and under the ownership or control of the State of California. The SNC may give favorable consideration to projects which "assist California tribes with procurement, protection or management of natural lands located within their ancestral territories, subject to available resources."

NOTE: SNC's governing statute does not allow grants to mutual water companies.

Project Eligibility

To be **eligible** to receive a grant award from the SNC under this program, projects must meet all of the following criteria:

- 1) Have completed environmental compliance.
- 2) Be located within the Sierra Nevada Region as defined by current SNC governing legislation.
- 3) Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan.
- 4) Be consistent with the requirements of the funding source and budget provisions.
- 5) Be complete by January 1, 2024, or January 1 of the year the funds revert, if different.
- 6) Requests no less than \$200,000.
- 7) Results in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.

Consistent with provisions of the program funding and objectives of the proposed project, the SNC may give favorable consideration to projects which involve California Native American tribes, employ a collaborative approach in project development or implementation; directly benefit severely disadvantaged (SDAC) or disadvantaged (DAC) communities; leverage private, federal, or local resources; or enable the equitable geographic distribution of SNC resources.

Project Examples

Examples of potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation of strategic fuel treatment projects (including mechanical treatments, hand treatments, and/or prescribed fire) that will reduce wildfire risks and promote watershed health
- Creation and maintenance of fuel breaks
- Fuel reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface
- Strategically located fuel reduction projects that protect public assets or public infrastructure
- Reforestation and implementation of suitable stand-improvement activities after wildfire or post-tree-mortality clearing efforts
- Forest management work to improve habitat conditions and/or protect biodiversity
- Forestry work that benefits fire evacuation routes
- Forest treatment projects that prevent and/or address the impacts of severe tree mortality

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Planning projects
- Grants to service or repay loans
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation
- Research, education, outreach, or event-related projects, although these types of activities may be included as a small part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds
- Fee title/easement acquisitions
- Any projects that do not meet the program priorities described in these guidelines

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If an applicant has questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their [SNC Area Representatives](#).

Eligible Costs

Direct Project Costs

For project costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the costs must be within the scope of the project, supported by appropriate documentation, and completed by the required deadline as identified in the grant agreement. Costs related to project-specific performance measures, project reporting, required signage, and cultural monitoring are eligible costs; they must be included in the project budget if being requested by the applicant.

Costs for travel and lodging directly related to the project are eligible but may not exceed the current state lodging and mileage reimbursement rates. Food and entertainment are not eligible expenses under this program. Please note that travel and related costs as part of a subcontract for project implementation are not subject to these limitations.

Administrative Costs

Administrative costs are shared overhead expenses rather than direct costs. Administrative costs may not exceed 15 percent of the SNC-funded direct project costs. In the event of an audit, projects with budgets that include administrative costs must be able to document the appropriateness of these expenses. A typical method for documentation of administrative overhead expenses is a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). A CAP is a formal accounting plan used to calculate and document the method for recovering overhead costs. SNC strongly recommends that grantees consult with an accounting professional to develop an appropriate method for calculating overhead rate and prepare a CAP.

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing or increasing a legal defense fund or endowment
- Monetary donations to other organizations
- Food or refreshments not part of a negotiated subcontract related to project implementation
- Costs associated with fundraising
- Grant writing expenses
- Any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is executed or after the project completion deadline, as identified in the grant agreement

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Right of Access for Project Implementation

Proposals must include a letter from all property owners/managers indicating their awareness of and willingness to implement the project and granting access to the property to conduct pre-project due diligence or other necessary activities. If the grantee does not own the property on which the project is implemented before a grant agreement is executed, the grantee must enter into a land tenure agreement with the landowner assuring ten years of access for project implementation and maintenance.

Environmental Compliance Documents

The SNC requires all projects comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) at the time the Board authorizes a grant. Since the complexity of CEQA compliance will vary depending on the proposed project activities and the type of applicant, it is very important that applicants consult with SNC staff as early as possible to discuss which CEQA documents will be required. If CEQA is not complete at the time of proposal, the lead agency for CEQA must be identified in the proposal, with a letter of support or other documentation from the agency stating that they are eligible and willing to serve as lead. In cases where a project is not exempt from CEQA and the partners do not have standing to act as lead agency, the SNC will consider acting as lead agency.

If the project is subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a NEPA decision must be in effect at the time the proposal is submitted.

NOTE: When projects have previously completed CEQA or NEPA documentation and the baseline environmental conditions of the project area have significantly changed (due to fire, tree mortality, etc.), applicants must provide confirmation from the agency responsible for preparing the original environmental compliance documents that the analysis and determinations remain valid.

Long-Term Management

Projects receiving support through this program must demonstrate a clear and enduring public benefit. This includes long-term viability of any programs developed through the project as well as on-the-ground site improvement components of a project. All site improvement project sites shall be maintained, operated, and used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the project. Additionally, the grantee and/or property owner shall not use any portion of the project site for mitigation or as security for any debt. The long-term management plan for site improvement or program development projects must include a description of how project deliverables will be managed and maintained over time, by whom, and how funding will be provided for such work.

Performance Measures and Reporting

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and

effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found on the [SNC Performance Measures](#) webpage.

SNC requires all grantees consider four specific quantitative performance measures:

- 1) Number and type of jobs created
- 2) Number and value of new, improved, or preserved economic activities
- 3) Resources leveraged for the Sierra Nevada
- 4) Number of people reached

In addition, each grantee will be required to report on one to three additional project-specific performance measures that will help describe project outcomes in a measurable way. Examples of additional performance measures can be found on the [SNC Performance Measures](#) webpage.

Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measures will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval.

All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline. The final report must include data associated with the project performance measures.

Engagement with California Native American Tribes

Recognizing that Native Americans have inhabited and cared for the land of present-day California since time immemorial, the SNC strongly encourages engagement with Native American tribes as early as possible in the development, planning, and implementation of projects. SNC staff can assist project proponents with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and help provide contact information for those tribes. The SNC will notify the appropriate tribal contacts regarding all eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area. SNC may prioritize projects in which tribal communities are involved.

Cooperation with Local Agencies

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities, and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

For all proposals under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city and public water agency affected (when appropriate), and request comments within 15 business days following notification. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments.

If there are privacy concerns related to information contained in a proposal, please notify SNC staff before submission.

Registered Professional Foresters

In compliance with the [Professional Foresters Law](#) (PRC Sections 750-753, et seq.), projects that directly impact the management and treatment of the forest resources and timberlands of this state are required to use Registered Professional Foresters. Projects implemented on federally managed lands will be permitted to use “qualified but exempt” federal staff to satisfy this requirement.

Additional Requirements

Any additional requirements or restrictions, including those specific to additional funding sources or new state budget requirements, will be included in updated program guidance documents.

DRAFT

IV. PROGRAM PROCESS

Proposal Development

As the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience program is a directed grant program, proposals are developed in conjunction with SNC. To initiate consideration of a project, an applicant must contact the appropriate SNC Area Representative or other SNC staff. The Area Representative will assist the applicant organizer to determine if the project meets SNC criteria. If it is determined that SNC will consider partnering on the project, the Area Representative will share the SNC proposal form with the applicant and assist in developing the project.

The development of a proposal includes the following:

- Applicants must [contact the SNC Area Representative assigned to their county](#) to determine whether a potential project is eligible for consideration.
- Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis while funding remains available.
- A site visit may be conducted for eligible projects.
- All project proposals are required to identify and state progress and projected dates of issuance for all permits necessary to implement the project.
- All project implementation MUST be complete by January 1, 2024, or January 1 of the year the funds revert, if different.

Schedule

Proposals will be accepted and reviewed on a continuous basis as funding is available. Recommendations will be made to the SNC Governing Board no less than quarterly.

Evaluation Process

The SNC will work closely with applicants in the development of the project and project proposal.

- 1) The project proposal will be reviewed by an environmental compliance expert.
- 2) Proposals will be shared with appropriate county/city planning, water agency, tribal representatives, and SNC Board Subregional representatives. If there are any privacy concerns related to information in a proposal, please discuss them with SNC staff before submission.
- 3) An SNC Evaluation Team will independently review and meet to discuss the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described in the following section.
- 4) The Evaluation Team will prepare a recommendation for SNC's Executive Team.
- 5) After the evaluation process is complete, including all due diligence and analysis by SNC, funding recommendation(s) will be placed on a future Board meeting agenda at the discretion of SNC's Executive Officer.

NOTE: The SNC may consider the geographic distribution of projects, tribal involvement, project locations related to disadvantaged communities, and project types when considering recommendations to the Board.

Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation Team will score the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described below. Proposals scoring 80 or more points may be eligible for a recommendation for award:

#1 Natural Resource and Public Benefits, and Alignment with Funding and Program Goals (20)

The degree to which the project aligns with funding program goals, improves forest and watershed health, and results in multiple, tangible public benefits. How strong is the need for the specific project and the natural resources benefits expected as outcomes?

#2 Project Readiness (15)

The degree to which the project is ready to proceed promptly and can meet funding expenditure requirements, if funded. Is project planning and coordination complete? Is access secured, environmental compliance, permitting, or other necessary preparations complete as appropriate? Is all funding identified or secured?

#3 Project Design and Budget (15)

Clarity on the project purpose, goals, deliverables, treatment approach, schedule, and budget. Is the project design supported by science and proven methodologies or the use of new or innovative technology or practices? Are the proposed deliverables appropriate for the project? Is the budget adequate and reasonable to implement the project, with costs clearly defined and supported?

#4 Long-Term Management (10)

Is a plan, funding, and the responsible entity in place for carrying out long-term management? How will public benefits be sustained?

#5 Likelihood of Success (15)

Does the project organizer have the necessary experience and sufficient capacity to implement the project as described? Will the project be completed by January 1, 2024?

#6 Community and Tribal Support and Collaboration (10)

The degree to which the project has public and institutional support at the local, Regional, or larger scale and the local community or other stakeholders are engaged in project planning or delivery. Was the project developed as part of collaborative? Is there clear and demonstrable community outreach and support for the project and any community economic benefits? Is there tribal support for, or tribal participation in, the project?

#7 Landscape-Level Context (10)

The degree to which the proposed project is part of a larger plan, coordinated effort, or is proximate to public lands or recreational amenities. Does the project support a broader, cumulative effort to restore/protect strategic goals?

#8 Leveraging (5)

The degree to which a project provides in-kind services and/or secured federal, state, private, or local cost share funding. Have non-monetary and/or funding resources of agencies and organizations other than SNC been identified and secured?

Grant Awards and Agreements

For each awarded grant, the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if an entity is awarded a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will apply.

- Administrative costs are limited to no more than 15 percent of the actual direct project costs.
- Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC.
- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline.
- To the extent practicable, site improvement projects will be required to include onsite signage indicating that the project was funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The required acknowledgement language is included in the grant agreement. Reasonable costs associated with creation and installation of the sign are eligible expenses and should be included in the project budget.

The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

V. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAP	Cost Allocation Plan
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
DAC	Disadvantaged Community
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Plan	Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan
PRC	Public Resources Code
SDAC	Severely Disadvantaged Community
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
WIP	Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

VI. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in these grant guidelines shall have the following meanings:

Acquisition – To obtain fee title ownership of real property. Leaseholds and rentals do not constitute acquisition.

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs include any expense which is not directly related to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of ‘overhead,’ administrative costs include shared costs, such as rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment, services such as internet and phone, shared bookkeeping costs, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for a SNC grant pursuant to these guidelines.

Board – The governing body of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

CEQA – The California Environmental Quality Act as set forth in the PRC Section 21000 et seq. CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities an entity performs to meet the requirements of CEQA and/or NEPA.

Collaborative Process – Cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed, and no single individual, agency, or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Conservancy – The Sierra Nevada Conservancy as defined in PRC Section 33302 (b).

Data – A body or collection of facts, statistics, or other items of information from which conclusions can be drawn.

Design – Preliminary project planning or identification of methodologies or processes to achieve project goals.

Disadvantaged Community (DAC) – A community with a median household income less than 80 percent of the statewide average. [View maps of DAC areas](http://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities) (<http://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities>).

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the performance period of an approved agreement, which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Enhancement – Modification of a site to increase/improve the condition of streams, forests, habitat, and other resources.

Executive Officer – Executive Officer of the SNC appointed by the Governing Board, pursuant to PRC Section 33328, to manage the SNC.

Fee Title – The primary interest in land ownership that entitles the owner to use the property subject to any lesser interests in the land and consistent with applicable laws and ordinances.

Forest Health – A healthy forest is a forest that possesses the ability to sustain the unique species composition and processes that exist within it. Forest health occurs when resilience, recurrence, persistence, and biophysical processes lead to sustainable ecological conditions.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement term.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope according to the terms of the agreement by the grantee.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

Grant Scope – Description of the items of work to be completed with grant funds as described in the application form and cost estimate.

In-kind Contributions – Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, within the project scope and timeframe, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as “other sources of funds” when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

Land Tenure – Legal ownership or other rights in land, sufficient to allow a grantee to conduct activities that are necessary for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. Examples include fee title ownership, an easement for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement, or agreements or a clearly defined process where the applicant has adequate site control for the purposes of the project.

NEPA – [The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969](https://ceq.doe.gov/), as amended. NEPA (<https://ceq.doe.gov/>) is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project.

Nonprofit Organization – A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in PRC Section 33300 et seq.

Other Sources of Funds – Cash or in-kind contributions necessary or used to complete the site improvement/restoration project beyond the grant funds provided by this program.

Performance Measure – A quantitative measure used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Permitting – The process of obtaining any necessary regulatory approvals from appropriate governmental agencies to implement the project.

Pre-Project Due Diligence – The analysis necessary to prepare a future on-the-ground project for implementation.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Proposal – The individual grant application form and its required attachments pursuant to the SNC Grant Program.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, district, joint powers authority, or state agency.

Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in PRC Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Region-wide – The overall breadth of the SNC Region or multiple Subregions within the Region.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate, or return the components and processes of a damaged site to a previous historical state.

Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) – A community with a median household income less than 60% of the statewide average. [View maps of SDAC areas](http://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities) (<http://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities>).

Study/Report – Research or the detailed examination and analysis of a subject.

Tribal Entities – Includes any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register. (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021**

Agenda Item 8: Executive Officer Authorization to Enter Agreements related to Wildfire and Forest Resilience Proposal

Background

On January 8, 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom released his proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The proposed budget includes a \$1 billion investment in forest health and fire prevention, beginning with \$323 million in an “early action” package to help the state prepare for upcoming fire seasons, and \$677 million in 2021-22 to build the state’s resilience to wildfires, increase pace and scale of ecological forest management, and reduce fire risk. The proposal builds on previous investments the Administration has made in forest and watershed health and scales up a variety of state programs that deliver across several investment categories: resilient forests and landscapes; wildfire fuel breaks, community hardening, science-based management, and forestry sector economic stimulus.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) administers its own grant programs using funds appropriated to it through the state budget process, but it can also be the recipient of funds via grant agreements or interagency agreements with other state departments. Several of the programs included as part of the governor’s wildfire and forest resilience proposal have previously granted funds to SNC, which SNC, in turn, has subgranted to local partners for various activities. For example, SNC has previously received grants from the Department of Conservation’s Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) to support organizational capacity and project planning work throughout the Region, and from CAL FIRE’s Forest Health Program to support workforce development projects.

Current Status

At the time of this report, the budget proposal is making its way through the legislative budget process. The SNC staff is in regular discussions with partner agencies to coordinate the roll-out and implementation of the funded programs pending budget approval. The SNC staff is considering the ways in which the package of programs may bring increased dollars into the Region and how SNC can best support and assist its regional and local partners.

Pending budget approval, each department identified to receive funding from the wildfire and forest resilience proposal is preparing to quickly invest dollars so they will have the earliest impact possible on the state’s forest resilience. In addition to preparing for delivery of SNC’s own forest and watershed health program, staff is also preparing for the potential of receiving additional grants from partner agencies that would need to be implemented throughout the Region within the time constraints of the “early action” and/or budget year appropriation timelines.

As mentioned above, if the budget proposal is passed, new funding may be granted from other state departments to the SNC to support its Region, such as through the RFFCP or other program that is a part of the larger funding package. The SNC staff would like to be able to respond quickly and efficiently. To prepare, staff is currently assessing needs and opportunities in the Sierra Nevada Region so that SNC can deploy new funding in a strategic and efficient manner, while also meeting the timeframe restrictions, intent, and purpose of the grant program from which the funds are administered.

Staff is requesting that the Board authorize the Executive Officer the delegated authority to enter into grants or contracts in the distribution of funding related to the Administration's \$1 billion wildfire and forest resilience proposal. This funding, especially programs included in "early action" funding, will have accelerated timelines for encumbering funds and executing projects. The delegated authority will allow SNC to move forward with agreements without having to wait for the next quarterly Board meeting for approval. Alternatively, the Board could direct staff to schedule additional board meetings between the quarterly meetings already scheduled to approve grants or contracts with state partners as they develop. Staff recommends the approach that the Board delegate authority to the Executive Officer to enter into grants and contracts that meet specific criteria, for purposes of expediency and efficiency, and to lessen workload and time needed to schedule additional board meetings as may be required for approval.

Staff is recommending that all grants authorized under this delegated authority meet the following criteria:

- 1) Are from programs included in the wildfire and forest resilience budget proposal
- 2) Meet the goals and objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program
- 3) Comply with the program guidelines of the state program from which the grant or contract is awarded
- 4) Be reported on at regularly scheduled Board meetings

Next Steps

The SNC staff will fulfill any mandated outreach and communication requirements prior to awarding grants and depending on Board action at this meeting, will report any new grants or agreements at regularly scheduled Board meetings. Any grants requiring California Environmental Quality Act environmental review and documentation beyond a Categorical Exemption would be brought to the Board for authorization.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board delegate authority to the Executive Officer to approve and execute grants and contracts consistent with the above-stated criteria and to report all new grants approved to the Board.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021**

**Agenda Item 9:
Forest and Watershed Health Grant Award
Recommendations**

Background

California voters passed Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for all Act of 2018, on June 5, 2018.

Proposition 68 includes two allocations of funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC):

- Section 80135(c) allocates \$25 million for competitive grants towards implementation of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) for projects related to forest health and climate resiliency, and
- Section 80110(b)(9) allocates \$30 million for purposes consistent with SNC's governing statute.

FY 2018-19 and 2019-2020 Grant Cycles

The Budget Act of 2018 appropriated \$20,625,000 to SNC from Section 80135(c) dedicated to forest health. This was the full allocation available for local assistance from this section. These funds were incorporated into the Forest Health Grant Program and were fully awarded as of June 2020.

The Budget Act of 2018 also appropriated \$10,675,000 to SNC for local assistance from Section 80110(b)(9) dedicated to conservancy purposes. In December 2018, the Board authorized grant guidelines for the following programs with the associated funding distribution, and awards were made over the fiscal year (FY) 2018-2020 grant cycles:

- Up to \$8,000,000 for Strategic Land Conservation
- No less than \$1,675,000 for Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- No less than \$1,000,000 for Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

No funds from this section were appropriated to the Forest Health Grant Program during the FY 2018-2020 period.

FY 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Grant Cycles

The Budget Act of 2020 appropriated \$5 million to SNC for local assistance from Section 80110(b)(9) dedicated to conservancy purposes. In June 2020, the Board authorized grant guidelines for the following programs with the associated funding distribution:

- \$3 million for Forest and Watershed Health

- \$1 million for Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- \$1 million for Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program

The current Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program includes four focus areas. Projects must fall within one of these focus areas to be considered for funding.

1. **Implementation of prescribed fire** to improve watershed health.
2. **Large-landscape planning** projects for forest health that demonstrate multiple watershed and ecosystem benefits. These projects must complete project planning on a minimum of 10,000 acres.
3. **Implementation of forest health planning projects** for which SNC previously funded the planning phase.
4. Projects that connect and serve **underserved partners**. Strategic partners that have received no more than one SNC grant since the start of the WIP Forest Health Program (in FY 2015-16 with funding from Proposition 1) will be eligible for grants to support planning or implementation of multi-benefit forest and watershed health projects.

Designed as a directed grant program, SNC staff works closely with local partners to identify and develop projects. Concept proposals and subsequent full proposals are evaluated on a quarterly basis.

Current Status

The SNC staff is working closely with local partners to develop Forest and Watershed Health projects. There are two projects which have been evaluated through SNC's directed grants process and are recommended for Board approval. These are the first projects to be recommended under the current Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program.

Project #1275

Thompson Peak Initiative Planning

Lassen Fire Safe Council

\$250,000

The Lassen Fire Safe Council, in cooperation with Plumas National Forest (PNF) and Susanville Indian Rancheria, will complete surveys and analyses and draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents for forest health treatments on a minimum of 10,000 acres of lands managed by PNF and the Susanville Indian Rancheria. The project is in Lassen and Plumas counties, south of Susanville, near the communities of Milford and Janesville

and is the highest priority for forest thinning in the Lassen County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Numerous letters were submitted in support of this Category 2 large landscape planning project.

CEQA Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Section 15262 of Title 14 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

- [Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1275\)](#)

Project #1276

***Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest
California Deer Association
\$120,000***

The California Deer Association (CDA) will complete surveys, analyses, and draft environmental documents necessary for NEPA and CEQA compliance and a forest watershed design plan to prepare 20,000 acres for future fuel reduction and prescribed fire activities. The project is in the Warner Mountains Ranger District on Modoc National Forest lands, four miles west of the severely disadvantaged community of Fort Bidwell and Fort Bidwell Reservation. The landscape has a high fuel load and high fire risk and is supported by multiple federal, state, and local partners. The project meets two of SNC's Forest and Watershed Health focus areas: It is a large landscape planning project that will provide multiple ecosystem benefits and CDA is an underserved partner strategically positioned to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration in Modoc County.

CEQA Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Section 15262 of Title 14 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

- [Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1276\)](#)

Next Steps

Upon authorization by the Board, staff will file all adopted CEQA documentation and prepare agreements for each authorized grant.

Staff will continue to work with partners to develop additional Forest and Watershed Health projects and anticipates recommending projects at future Board meetings to award the full amount of funds available. If the recommended grants presented in this report are authorized, a minimum of \$2,630,000 is available for future awards under the current appropriation.

Recommendations

9a. Staff recommends the Board authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the *Thompson Peak Initiative Planning* project (1275), authorize a

grant award in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

9b. Staff recommends the Board authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the *Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest* (1276), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

Agenda Item 9:
Forest and Watershed Health
Grant Award Recommendations

Project Details and the Notice of
Exemption (Project #1275)

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest Health Grant Program SNC Project Number 1275

SNC ID Number: 1275

Applicant: Lassen Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Thompson Peak Initiative Planning

SNC Subregion: North

Counties: Lassen, Plumas

Funding Amount Requested: \$250,000

Funding Amount Recommended: \$250,000

Total Project Cost: \$400,000

Funding Authority: Proposition 68, Chapter 8, Section 80110(b)(9)

Project Scope / Description

The Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project is a 14,082-acre, Category 2 forest and watershed treatment planning project on federally managed and tribal lands. Led by the Lassen Fire Safe Council (LFSC), in coordination with the Plumas National Forest (PNF) and the Susanville Indian Rancheria (SIR), the project is located in Lassen and Plumas counties southeast of Susanville, less than a mile south and west of the community of Milford and west of U.S. Route 395 within the greater 92,703-acre Thompson Peak Initiative (TPI) treatment planning area. The project will complete required surveys for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation for forest and watershed restoration treatments on a minimum of 10,000 acres of lands managed by the PNF and the SIR.

The project meets the large-landscape planning focus area of the Forest and Watershed Health Program by completing project planning on a minimum of 10,000 acres. The expected outcome of the proposed work is completion of NEPA and CEQA planning processes, with future implementation to reduce wildfire threats to communities, water supplies, and wildlife habitat. The mixed conifer and eastside-pine stands within the TPI area are currently overstocked with elevated levels of tree mortality and high fuel loads. The TPI project area makes up the headwaters of multiple watercourses important to local communities for irrigation and potable water supplies and is the highest priority for forest thinning in the Lassen County Community Wildfire Protection Plan due to high hazardous fuel loads and the great risk to communities from wildfire.

The proposed project is part of a larger TPI to reduce hazardous fuels and complete forest and watershed restoration treatments in the Janesville-Milford corridor. The Diamond Mountain Forest and Watershed Restoration project (#1065) is currently reducing fire risk on 1,065 acres immediately north and west of this project. Fuel reduction treatments are also underway on 3,000 acres of private lands to the north of this project funded by a CAL FIRE California Climate Investments (CCI) grant. The CCI project includes 2,000 additional acres of treatment that will be completed under a LFSC/PNF Master Stewardship Agreement. The LFSC and the PNF are currently working on NEPA planning for a 4,424-acre PNF project, called Bootsole, with an expected decision in early 2021.

The LFSC, composed of in-house and contracted staff, has worked collaboratively to treat and restore over 60,000 acres in Lassen, Modoc, and Shasta counties over the past 15 years. The LFSC has completed 11 grants with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in addition to the current Category 1 project (#1065) in the Diamond Mountains. The PNF is the land manager for most of the project area. Approximately 160 acres of the project is located on lands owned by the SIR.

The TPI planning group includes CAL FIRE, the PNF, the SIR, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc., Lassen County Government, Honey Lake Power, Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District, the Milford, Janesville and Susan River Fire Protection Districts, Industrial Timberland owners, and local residents. Project specialist reports will be funded by an additional \$150,000 from the Lassen County Resource Advisory Committee, the PNF, and the LFSC CCI grant (\$50,000 from each source).

The project supports the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). Much of the treatment planning area is located within the Feather River (and Sacramento River) watershed, with a smaller portion in the Susanville (and North Lahontan) watershed. Water uses include domestic use and agricultural irrigation. The project aligns with the goals of Proposition 68 and will implement fuel treatment projects that reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds tributary to water storage facilities, improve watershed storage capacity, protect life and property, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the resiliency of local communities to climate change.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Identify a minimum of 10,000 acres within TPI planning area to prioritize for survey work. Identify survey needs	6/1/2021
Prepare bid packages for project specialists	6/15/2021
Award contracts for project specialists	6/30/2021
Begin Year 1 Surveys: begin biology and archeological surveys on SIR & PNF; begin additional surveys as needed (e.g., biology, hydrology and soils, silviculture)	7/1/2021
Draft CEQA document for Susanville Indian Rancheria land	10/1/2021
Begin Year 2 Biological Surveys; continue archaeological and other surveys	4/1/2022
Begin Year 3 Surveys	4/1/2023
Complete all surveys	10/31/2023
Finalize treatment units; finalize project record for NEPA decision on PNF lands	6/1/2024
Draft NEPA and CEQA documents for PNF lands	12/31/2024
Submit progress reports	Every 6 months
Estimated Project Completion Date	June 1, 2025

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
LFSC Personnel	\$10,000
Contractual - project management, specialist reports, IDT lead	\$203,392
Travel	\$4,000
Administrative Costs	\$32,608
Total	\$250,000

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- Stephanie Coppeto, Acting District Ranger, Beckwourth Ranger District, Plumas National Forest
- Deana Bovée, Tribal Chairwoman, Susanville Indian Rancheria
- Emily Ryan, Field Office Manager, Eagle Lake Field Office, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- Scott Packwood, Unit Chief, Lassen Modoc, CAL FIRE
- Jeff Hemphill, Supervisor District 3, Lassen County Board of Supervisors

- Andrea Stuemky, District Manager, Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District
- Lassen County Chamber of Commerce
- Thomas Mason, Plant Manager, Greenleaf Power
- Susan River Fire Protection District
- Janesville Fire Protection District
- Milford Volunteer Fire Department

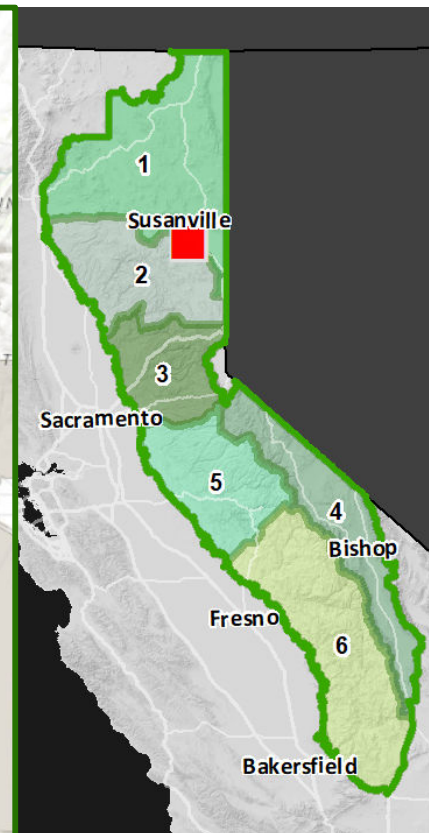
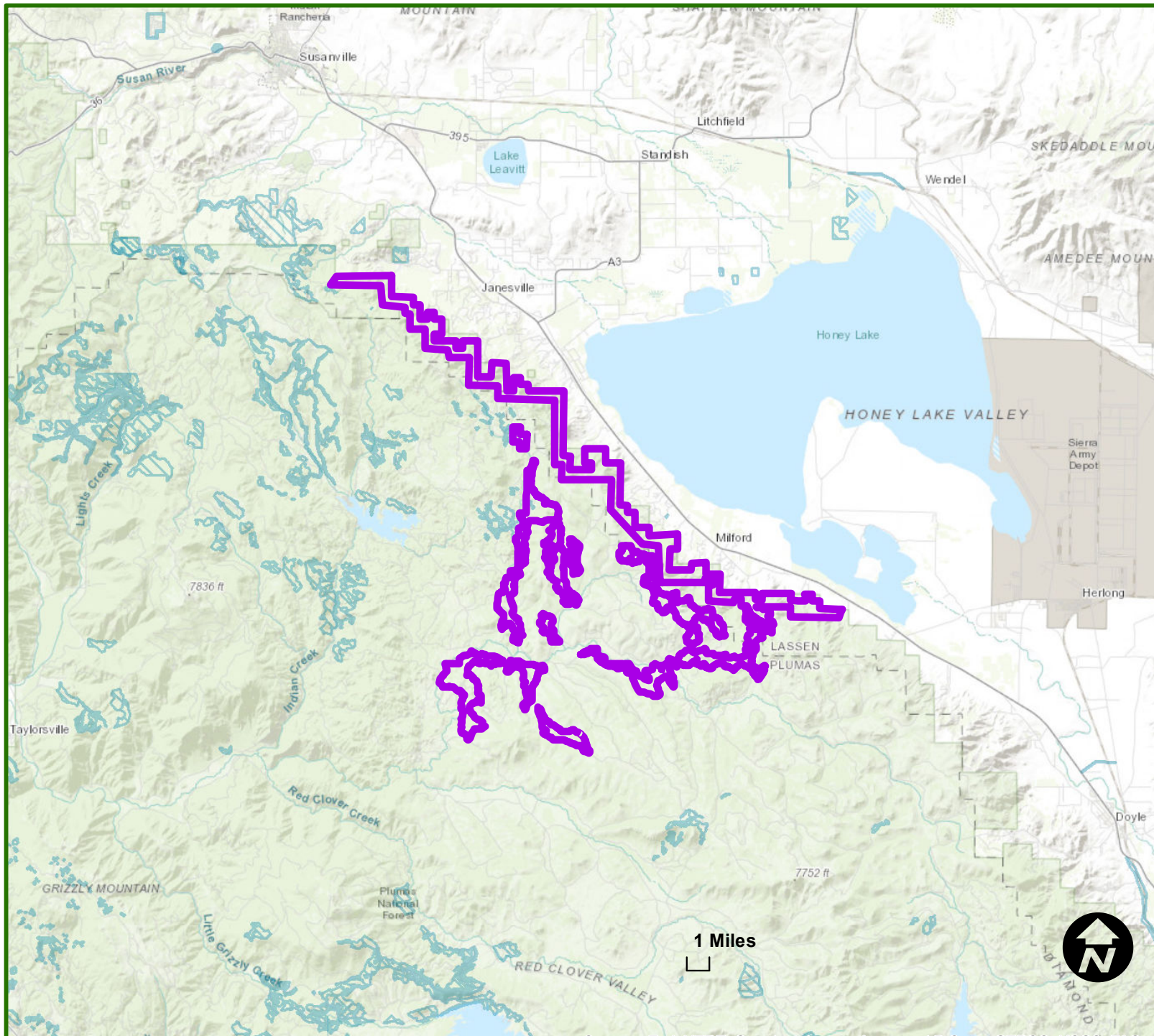
Opposition:










- None received

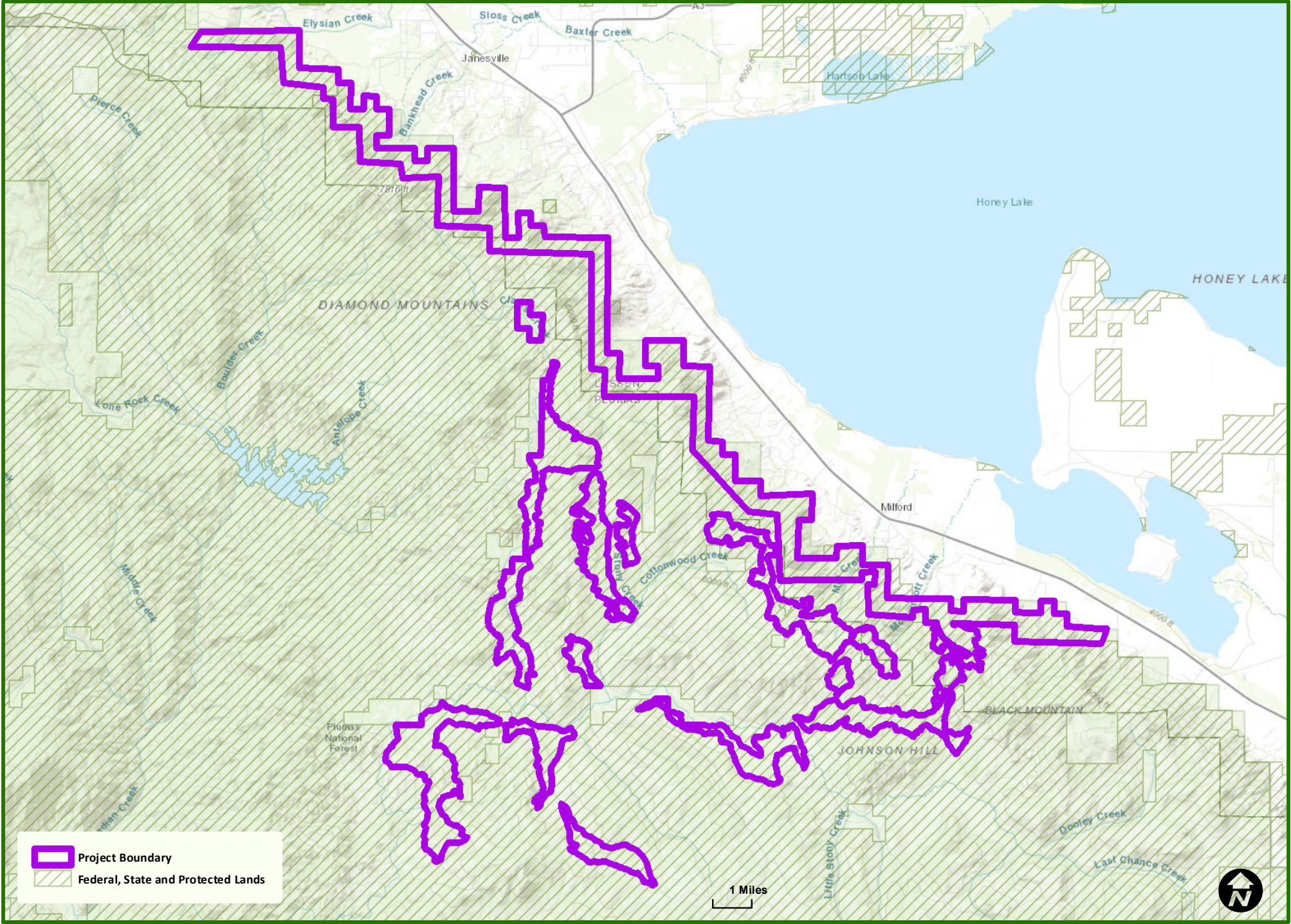
Project Performance Measures

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

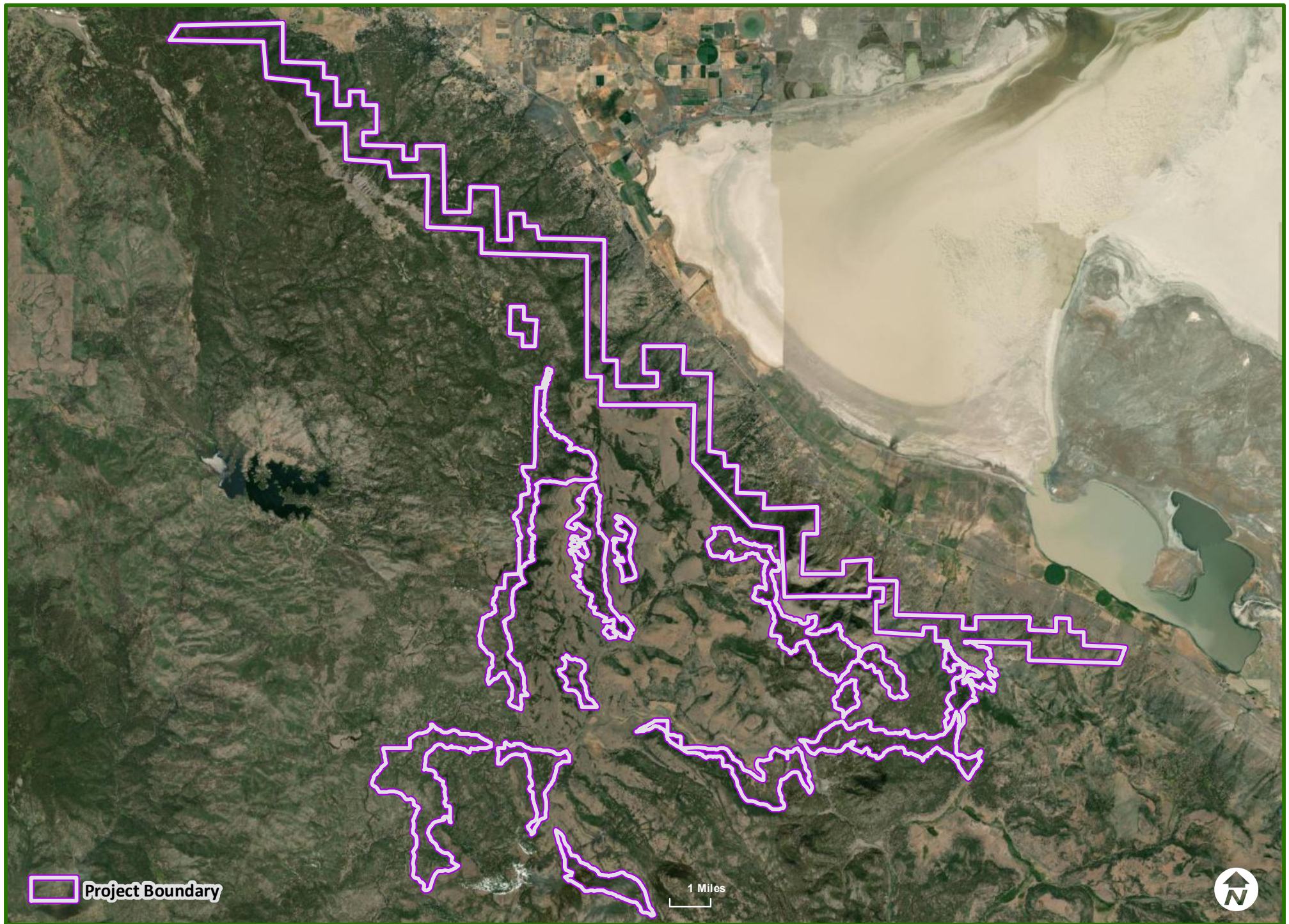
- Percent of pre-project and planning efforts resulting in project implementation
- Number of collaboratively developed plans and assessments



-  Project Boundary (Primary Map)
-  Other Projects (Primary Map)
-  Project Location (Regional Map)
-  1 North Subregion
-  2 North Central Subregion
-  3 Central Subregion
-  4 East Subregion
-  5 South Central Subregion
-  6 South Subregion



1275 Thompson Peak Initiative Planning
Lassen Fire Safe Council



1275 Thompson Peak Initiative Planning
Lassen Fire Safe Council

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
(Address)

County Clerk
County of:
Plumas
520 Main Street, Room 102
Quincy, CA 95971

Lassen
220 S Lassen St. Suite 5
Susanville, CA 96130

Project Title: Thompson Peak Initiative Planning

Project Location – Specific:

Southeast quadrant of the greater Susanville, CA community. The project will occur within the Thompson Peak Initiative treatment planning area, located less than one mile south and west of Milford, approximately 1.5 miles south and east of Janesville, and west of route 395.

Project Location - City: Less than one mile south and west of Milford, and approximately 1.5 miles south and east of Janesville
Project Location - County: Lassen, Plumas

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide \$250,000 in funding for planning and feasibility studies related to fuel and hazard reduction for approximately 14,082 acres within the 92,703 acre Thompson Peak Initiative planning area located in Lassen and Plumas Counties near Milford and Janesville. Funding would be used to complete resource surveys and prepare CEQA and NEPA documentation.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc.

Exempt Status: **(check one)**

- No Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
No Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
No Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
No Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:
Yes Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262, "Feasibility and Planning Studies"

Reasons why project is exempt:

This is a planning project involving data collection and the preparation of environmental analysis documents; it does not involve physical alterations to the environment. Specific actions include resource surveys and preparation of NEPA and CEQA documents that evaluate future possible actions. However, those actions have not been approved, and the completion of these environmental documents will not have a legally binding effect on future activities.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Shannon Ciotti

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project: Yes ___ No ___

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

Signed by Lead Agency: Yes

Signed by Applicant: No

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Agenda Item 9:
Forest and Watershed Health
Grant Award Recommendations

Project Details and the Notice of
Exemption (Project #1276)

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest Health Grant Program SNC Project Number 1276

SNC ID Number: 1276

Applicant: California Deer Association

Project Title: Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest

SNC Subregion: North

County: Modoc

Funding Amount Requested: \$120,000

Funding Amount Recommended: \$120,000

Total Project Cost: \$185,000

Funding Authority: Proposition 68, Chapter 8, Section 80110(b)(9)

Project Scope / Description

Fandango Planning is a Category 2 project led by the California Deer Association (CDA) that will complete the surveys and analyses necessary for National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for fuel reduction activities on 20,000 acres in Modoc County. The project is in the Warner Mountains Ranger District on Modoc National Forest lands and is four miles west of the severely disadvantaged community of Fort Bidwell and disadvantaged Fort Bidwell Reservation.

The CDA will collaborate with federal, state, tribal, and local partners to organize an interdisciplinary team, and provide all surveys and analyses required for future implementation of prescribed fire, fuel and wildfire risk reduction, and improved forest health in meadows and aspen stands. The project will complete surveys and analyses necessary for lead agencies to complete NEPA and CEQA. The CDA will also develop a forest watershed design for 20,000 to 22,000 acres for the Fandango area. Future implementation within the project design boundary will include prescribed fires on a seven-unit rotation, improved aspen and meadow health and resilience, increased groundwater recharge, improved forest structure, and a greater diversity of wildlife. Preparing the landscape for future prescribed fire will benefit the forest, vegetation, wildlife, and neighboring communities as the landscape has unnaturally heavy fuel loads that require large-scale reductions before fire can be reintroduced and used for future maintenance.

Currently, the fire-adapted landscape is overgrown with fire-prone and invasive vegetation that has high water consumption and competes with native species. To date, only a few small fuel reduction projects have been completed in the area. Once the forest watershed design is completed, it will provide guidance for prescribed fire and improved forest health.

The CDA is a nonprofit wildlife conservation organization whose principal goal is to improve California deer herds and other wildlife through direct financial support for habitat improvement and research projects. The CDA has not received a previous Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) grant. The CDA has a strong reputation in the area built from successful partnerships with numerous federal, state, and tribal partners, businesses, and local individuals. The project is entirely located on lands managed by the Modoc National Forest.

The CDA and Modoc National Forest will contribute a combined \$65,000 in match to the project. Once the Fandango Planning Project has been completed, future implementation will provide multiple forest health benefits across at least 20,000 acres.

The Fandango Planning Project meets two of SNC's Forest and Watershed Health focus areas. It is a large landscape planning project that will provide multiple ecosystem benefits and is a project that is submitted by CDA, an underserved SNC partner. This project is in the ancestral land for the Pit River Tribe and will benefit communities in the Sacramento River and North Lahontan hydrologic regions and four watersheds in the disadvantaged community of Modoc County. The neighboring communities will directly benefit from the planning project and future restoration implementation as it will reduce wildfire risks, provide increased downstream benefits to water users, and improve public access and enjoyment of the Modoc National Forest.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Facilitate widespread outreach and collaborative partner meetings, project site visits, project management, and data compilation.	April 2021 through April 2023
Hire and manage contractors to conduct environmental surveys and analysis necessary for NEPA and CEQA	April 2021 through April 2023
Draft NEPA and CEQA documents	April 2023
Watershed design complete	April 2023
Progress reports	Every 6 months
Final programmatic and financial reports	April 2023
Estimated Project Completion Date	April 2023

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Three CDA staff (State Wildlife Project Director, Project Manager, Grant Administrator) for project management, data compilation, contractor quality control and oversight, reporting, facilitate partner meetings.	\$28,000
CDA travel costs	\$8,000
Contractors for NEPA and CEQA surveys	\$61,000
CEQA filing fees	\$7,500
Administrative Costs	\$15,500
Total	\$120,000

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- Modoc National Forest Supervisor
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Modoc National Wildlife Refuge
- CAL FIRE – Lassen-Modoc Unit
- Modoc Fire Safe Council
- Modoc Resource Conservation District
- Goose Lake Resource Conservation District
- Ore-Cal Resource Conservation and Development Area Council
- University of California Cooperative Extension Modoc County

- Natural Resources Conservation Service – Modoc Office
- Modoc County Sheriff's Office
- Modoc County Cattlemen's Association

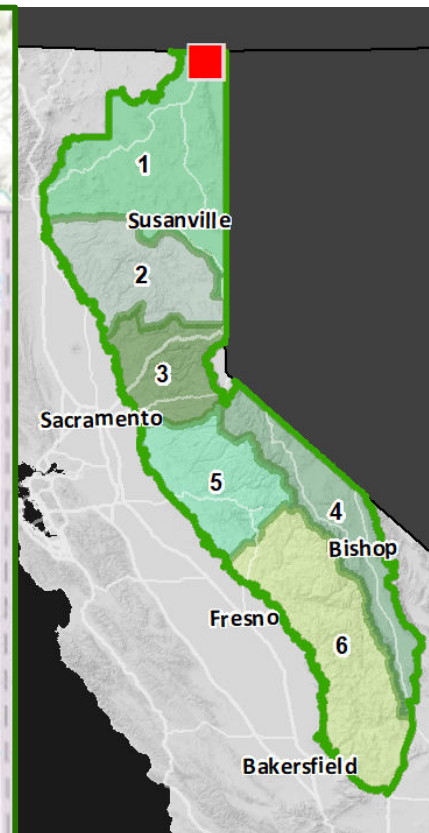
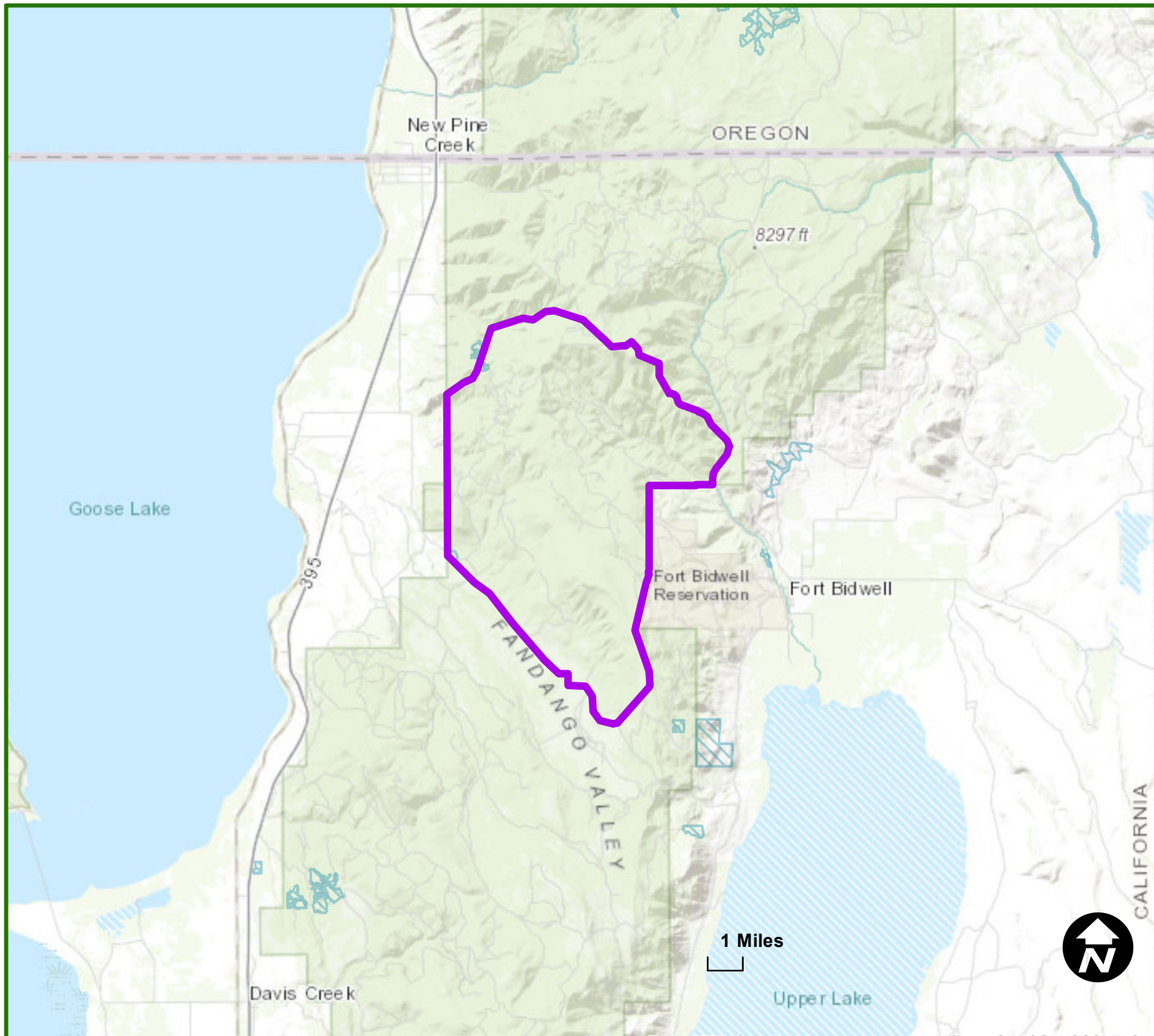
Opposition:










- None received

Project Performance Measures

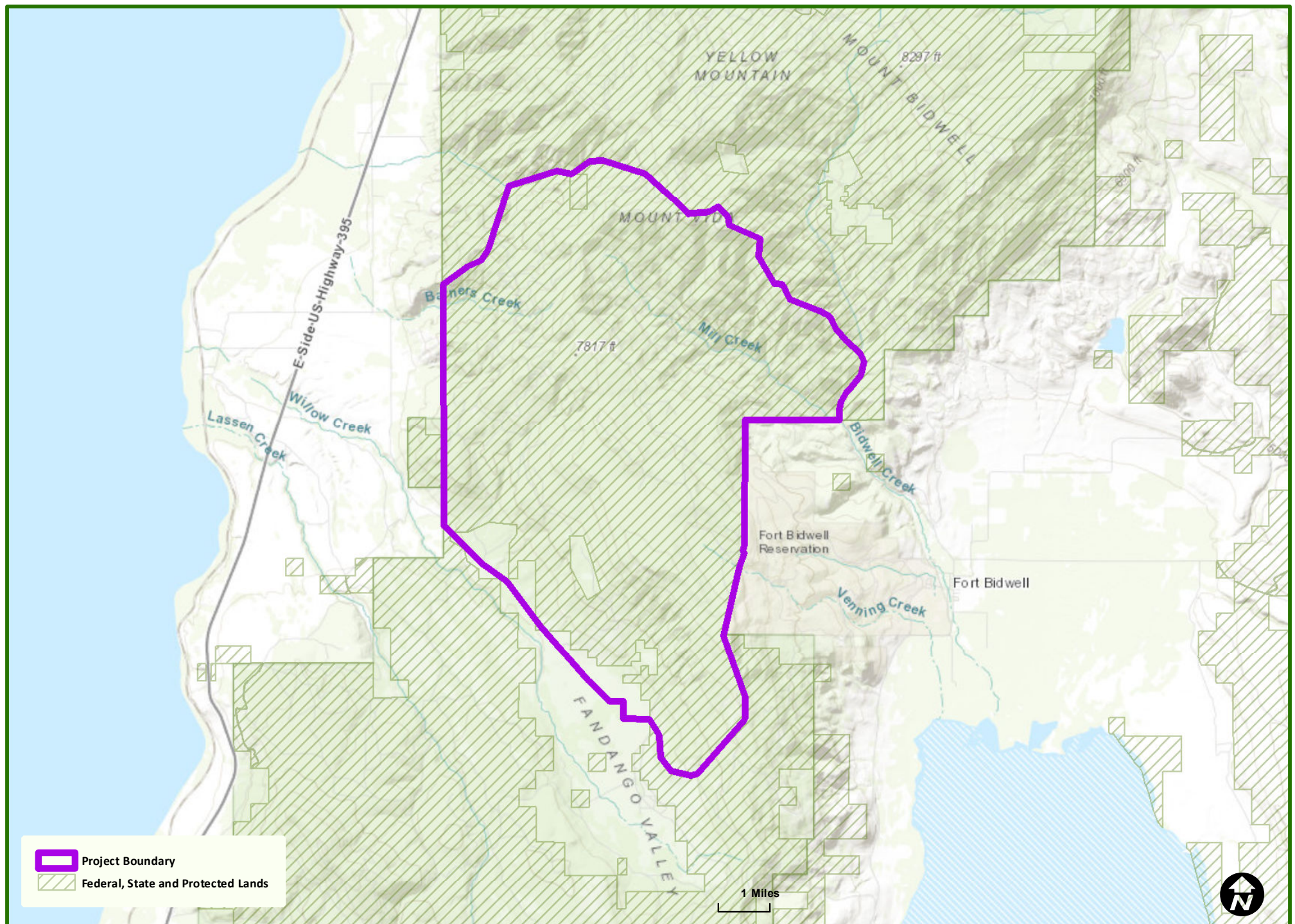
There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

- Number of collaborative developed plans and assessments

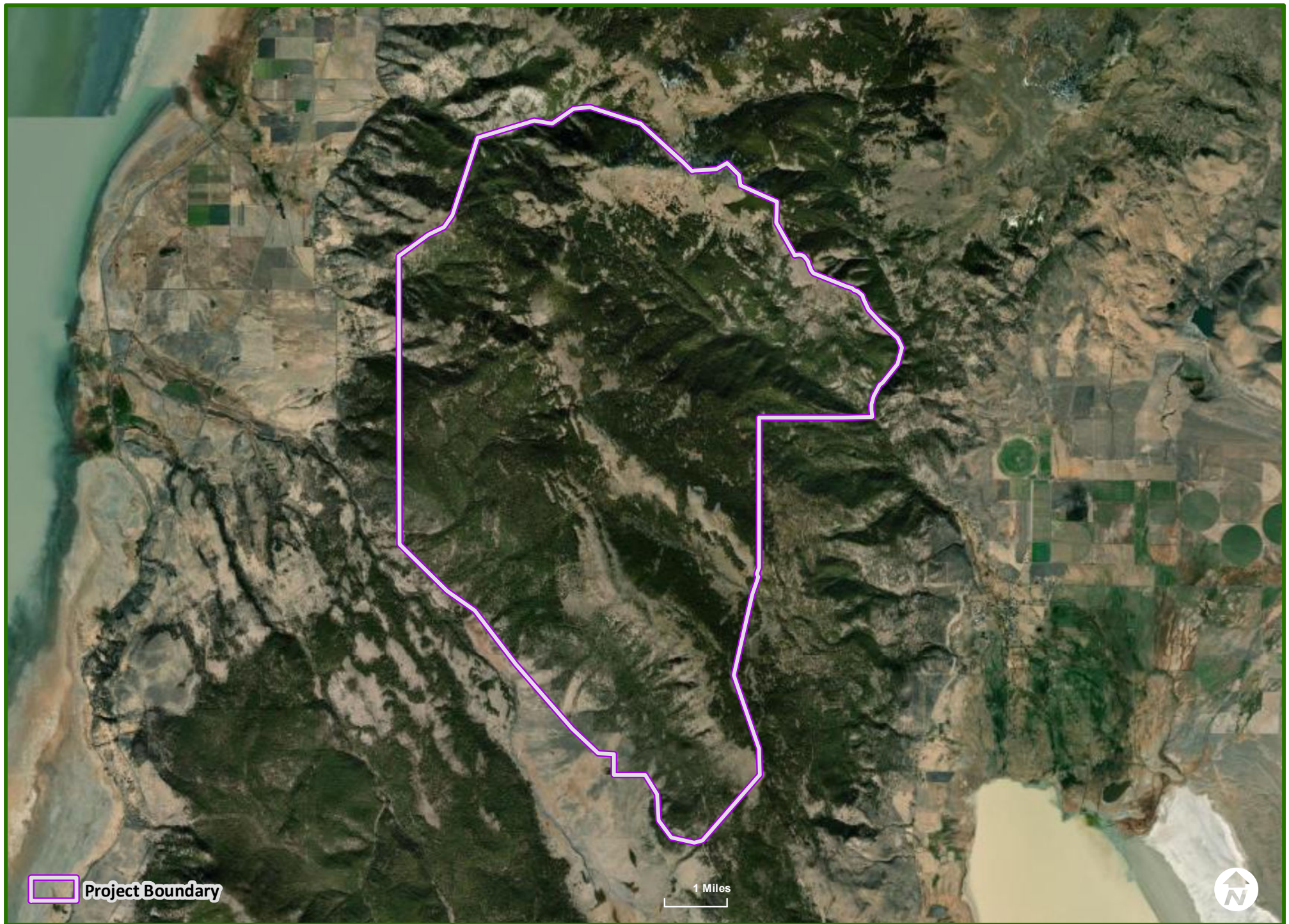


-  Project Boundary (Primary Map)
-  Other Projects (Primary Map)
-  Project Location (Regional Map)
-  1 North Subregion
-  2 North Central Subregion
-  3 Central Subregion
-  4 East Subregion
-  5 South Central Subregion
-  6 South Subregion

1276 Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest **California Deer Association**



1276 Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest
California Deer Association



1276 Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest
California Deer Association

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
(Address)

County Clerk
County of: Modoc
108 E Modoc St
Alturas, CA 96101

Project Title: Fandango Planning Project to Restore 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest

Project Location – Specific:

Located on the upper northeast side of the Warner Mountains Ranger District, on Modoc National Forest land.

Project Location - City: Approximately four miles west of Fort Bidwell

Project Location - County: Modoc

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide \$120,000 in funding for surveys and analysis necessary for NEPA, CEQA, and forest watershed design plan requirements in preparation for fuel and hazard reduction and forest restoration for approximately 22,000 acres on Modoc National Forest. This forest health planning project would prepare for the potential implementation of restoration and fuel reduction activities on land within the Modoc National Forest, returning it closer to a fire-adapted landscape.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California Deer Association (CDA)

Exempt Status: **(check one)**

No Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);

No Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));

No Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));

No Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:

Yes Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262, "Feasibility and Planning Studies"

Reasons why project is exempt:

This is a planning project involving data collection and the preparation of environmental analysis documents; it does not involve physical alterations to the environment. Specific actions include resource surveys, forest management planning, and preparation of NEPA and CEQA documents that evaluate future possible actions. However, those actions have not been approved, and the completion of these environmental documents will not have a legally binding effect on future activities.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Shannon Ciotti

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project: Yes ___ No ___

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

Signed by Lead Agency: Yes

Signed by Applicant: No

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021

Agenda Item 10: Roadmap to Resilience Update

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) contracted with Spatial Informatics Group (SIG) to develop a “Roadmap to Resilience” for the Sierra Nevada region. The team has built off of the information and lessons-learned coming out of the Tahoe-Central Sierra and other successful forest restoration collaboratives to identify tools, data, and processes critical to an efficient collaborative process and effective communication to key audiences.

The SIG team includes Ashley Conrad-Saydah, Shane Romsos, Jean-Pierre Wack, Justine Bui, and Erin Alvey. They have partnered with Kerri Timmer from the Sierra Business Council on this contract.

Current Status

Ashley Conrad-Saydah from SIG will present initial recommendations to the Board for actions the SNC can take to retain and enhance its position as a key organization in the Sierra Nevada Region by bringing funding, data, personnel, research and on-the-ground support to collaboratives and regions on the path to resilience. The SIG will propose actions and opportunities for Boardmember consideration regarding ways the SNC might aid regions in increasing the pace and scale of restoration in service to statewide socio-ecological resilience.

Next Steps

Feedback and comments from the Board will be incorporated into a final report scheduled to be delivered at the end of May. Staff will then consider ways to implement the actions included in the final report and will provide updates to Boardmembers at future meetings.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
March 4, 2021**

Key Meetings and Presentations

December 2020 – February 2021

January 27, 2021 – Quarterly Resilient Forests Coalition Convening with Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary of Forest Resources Management at the California Natural Resources Agency: SNC convenes these quarterly gatherings to provide an opportunity for regular dialogue and engagement around current and upcoming forest health policy activities between the California Natural Resources Agency and the members of the Coalition. The January 27 meeting will focus on a discussion about the coordination between the Shared Stewardship MOU, the Forest Management Task Force Forest Action Plan, and various regional forest health and wildfire risk reduction planning and prioritization efforts.

February 4-5, 2021 – California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) Conference on California Water: Executive Officer Angela Avery will speak on a virtual panel, “Fighting Fire with Fire: Controlled Burns, Watershed Management, and Big Science for the 21st Century,” and participate in the roundtable discussion that follows. This event convenes state policymakers with farm owners and environmental advocates, labor and industry leaders, and water managers to focus on how to smartly grapple with California's unending water scarcity challenge.

February 9, 2021 – Assembly Budget Hearing on the Wildfire Budget: Executive Officer Angela Avery may testify at this hearing about SNC's inclusion in the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience budget proposal.

February 11, 2021 – Public Policy Institute of California Webinar on Forest Health: Executive Officer Angela Avery will serve as a panelist during this webinar and will discuss actions needed to accelerate the pace and scale of headwater forest management. The discussion will reflect on the recently signed state-fed shared stewardship agreement, the Forest Management Task Force's action plan published last week, and the Governor's proposed budget for wildfire and forest resilience.

February 25, 2021 - RLF Climate Funding Event: Executive Officer Angela Avery will virtually attend this online workshop. This event is being put on by Resources Legacy Fund and OnClimate. This workshop will explore funding pathways to address pressing climate resilience needs in California. The goal of this convening is to review and refine four potential funding sources and financial tools that state and local governments can use to prepare for and respond to the effects of climate change in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner.

December 2020 –
February 2021

Letters of Support



AUBURN OFFICE
11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205
Auburn, CA 95603
p (530)823-4670 f (530)823-4665

January 13, 2021

Mr. Kevin Schroder
Caltrans District 10 - Office of Rural Planning
1976 E. Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard
Stockton, CA 95201

Dear Mr. Schroder:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to recommend the Mariposa County Planning Department for Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program funding to support the development of Phase IV of the Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan, a coordinated vision for nearly four miles of dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, wildfire resilience and mixed income housing throughout the Mariposa Creek Corridor.

SNC is a California state agency with a mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region and its rural communities. As part of our focus, SNC works to enhance the public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

This project will develop a Special Plan for the Phase IV portion of the Mariposa Creek Parkway, laying the foundation for a planned community that integrates active transportation, mixed income housing, and various civic and retail uses. The project will explore strategies for applying green infrastructure techniques for improving water quality, restoring the native riparian landscape, and promoting community resiliency to the impacts of climate change, including catastrophic wildfire and flooding.

The Mariposa Creek Parkway Master Plan meets the goals of multiple SNC Program areas. The coordinated vision for installing a network of trails, housing, and recreational facilities as well as restoration work in the Mariposa Creek Parkway fall in line with the many of the goals of the SNC Strategic Plan. SNC believes that collaboration is key to working in the Sierra Nevada Region and has excellent working relationships with many of the organizations listed as partners on this project. Additionally, we have invested approximately \$1 million to some of the partnering organizations for watershed protection and restoration projects in the Mariposa area.

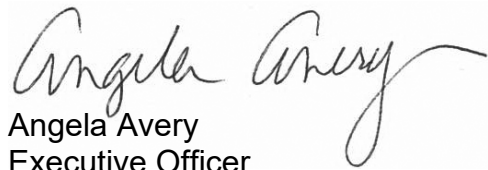
WWW.SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV
TOLL FREE (877)257-1212



Mr. Kevin Schroder
January 13, 2021
Page 2 of 2

Funding this project will help determine a shared community vision for the Mariposa Creek Parkway, which is essential for implementing an equitable and functional Parkway project. SNC therefore recommends Mariposa County Planning Department for the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer

cc: Michael Goralnik
Community Design and Development Planner for Mariposa County





AUBURN OFFICE
11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205
Auburn, CA 95603
p (530)823-4670 f (530)823-4665

January 19, 2021

United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

**RE: THE SIERRA FUND'S PROPOSAL TO THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE
WOOD INNOVATIONS GRANT PROGRAM**

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to express our support for The Sierra Fund's application to the United States Forest Service Wood Innovations Grant Program entitled: "*Grizzly Creek Hydraulic Mine Remediation with Biochar: a Pilot Project for the Tahoe National Forest*". The Sierra Fund will partner with the United States Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest to integrate hydraulic mine remediation, including the use of biochar as a soil amendment, into a holistic forest health restoration plan at the 23-acre Grizzly Creek Hydraulic Mine site within the Trapper Forest Health Project. This multi-benefit forest health and hydraulic mine remediation project in Nevada County, California will develop a new economic model for reducing fire risk and advancing mine land restoration techniques in California's Gold Country to benefit ecosystems and communities. The project will simultaneously reduce polluted storm runoff and reduce wildland fuels and fire risk in the surrounding area.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy awarded The Sierra Fund \$74,483 of nonfederal match to complete environmental planning needed for this project. Planning is expected to be complete in Spring 2021; the outcomes include a fuels reduction and erosion prevention plan, hydraulic mine remediation design, and the surveys and special studies necessary to meet California Environmental Quality Act compliance.

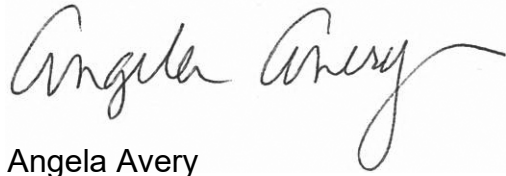
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TOLL FREE (877)257-1212



United States Forest Service
Wood Innovations Grant Program
January 19, 2021
Page 2 of 2

The SNC strongly supports the multiple benefits of integrating fuels reduction activities with mine remediation to increase the resiliency of the forests and watersheds of the Sierra Nevada range of California and urges the U.S. Forest Service to approve funding for this innovative project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Avery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Angela" and last name "Avery" clearly distinguishable.

Angela Avery
Executive Officer

WWW.SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV
TOLL FREE (877)257-1212





AUBURN OFFICE
11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205
Auburn, CA 95603
p (530)823-4670 f (530)823-4665

February 11, 2021

California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Watershed Restoration Grants Branch
1416 Ninth Street, 12th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Restoration Grants Selection Panel and Director Bonham:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to express support for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments' (ESCOG) Joint Powers Authority (JPA) planning grant application for the Eastern Sierra Pace & Scale Accelerator. The ESCOG JPA was born out of the recognition by the four member agencies that the present pace and scale needs for forest and watershed restoration outweigh the capacity of any single entity in the Eastern Sierra. By working together, the member agencies are well-positioned to restore and preserve the invaluable natural capital of the Sierra Nevada's eastside and better safeguard and sustain local communities that rely on our vibrant and diverse bioregion.

Planning funds, if awarded by CDFW, would enable the ESCOG JPA and its partners to complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the 55,000-acre Eastern Sierra Climate & Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP) in the Inyo National Forest surrounding the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The ESCCRP project area supports habitat for numerous sensitive species, including recent sightings of Sierra Nevada red fox and a Pacific fisher. The project area also encompasses a significant proportion of the Upper Owens River headwaters that provides drinking water to local communities and more than a third of the municipal water supply of the City of Los Angeles.

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TOLL FREE (877)257-1212

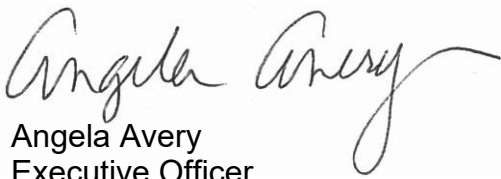


February 11, 2021

Page 2 of 2

The SNC is currently funding the first phase of the ESCCRP planning effort: stakeholder involvement, technical assistance, a collaboratively developed and agreed upon project extent, proposed actions, and the completion of a request for proposals for environmental planning services. The Accelerator (this proposal) will complete NEPA and required studies to make 55,000 acres ready for implementation on the federal land. Additionally, it will complete preparations for the California Environmental Quality Act, positioning the project for future state funding, and concurrently build critical capacity for future forest restoration in the region. The SNC encourages the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to join us as early funders of this large-landscape scale forest restoration effort.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer

WWW.SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV
TOLL FREE (877)257-1212





AUBURN OFFICE
11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205
Auburn, CA 95603
p (530)823-4670 f (530)823-4665

February 12, 2021

Matt Wells, Branch Chief
Watershed Restoration Grants Branch
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1416 9th Street, 12th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Letter of Support for Sierra Foothill Conservancy's Wandern Ranch Phase I Conservation Easement Acquisition Project Application

Dear Mr. Wells,

I am pleased to provide this letter in support of Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC) and their application to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) 2021 Proposition 1 Restoration Grant Program for the Wandern Ranch Phase I Conservation Easement Acquisition Project.

The Wandern Ranch Phase I property is 1,030 acres and contains a mile of the Chowchilla River featuring a healthy riparian corridor and thriving blue oak woodland. Collectively these diverse habitats provide potential for up to 17 special-status plants and 21 special-status wildlife species. Conservation of the Wandern Ranch would enhance the conservation values, continue the economic use of this working cattle ranch, and protect the biodiversity, water quality, and rural character of Madera County and benefit the Chowchilla River watershed, downstream users, and the people of California.

The project aligns with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. I appreciate the opportunity to recommend this project for consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery
Executive Officer

WWW.SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV
TOLL FREE (877)257-1212

